Russia's Great Power Ambitions: The Role of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's Contemporary Relations with Northeast Asia

CONTRERAS-LUNA, RAFAEL

RUSSIA'S GREAT POWER AMBITIONS: THE ROLE OF SIBERIA, THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST, AND THE ARCTIC IN RUSSIA'S CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS WITH NORTHEAST ASIA

Rafael Contreras Luna

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Durham University

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ABSTRACT

Being at the confluence of two worlds – East and West – has had long-term influence on how Russia has thought of its national identity, in particular prompting the question: to what extent is it joining or resisting these two worlds? This thesis argues that Russia's self-perception of being a great power – greatpowerness - defines its status and position in the world. This 'greatpowerness' is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making. Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has established a long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Asiatic Russia, and advance its integration into Northeast Asia.

This thesis pursues a research study focusing on these problems: Russia's insistence on its great power status and the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia as a key demand of national identity. The thesis tries to explain how Russian foreign policy reflects this; but also how Asiatic Russia remains a central element defining and promoting this national identity and its quest for great power status. This thesis aims to examine how the aforementioned ideas relate to the apparent necessity of Russia to develop Asiatic Russia and integrate it into Northeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region, pointing out to the dilemmas between cooperation and security issues. The function and perception of Asiatic Russia has never been exclusively internal or external but has always arisen out of the interaction of the two. Therefore this thesis does not only study changes in Asiatic Russia in the post-Soviet period; but also the new external conditions in Northeast Asia.

This thesis attempts to connect three aspects—national identity, geographical settings, and external strategy, to determine the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asian countries.

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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What happened to the governments? According to tradition, they were gradually falling into disuse. They called elections, declared wars, imposed tariffs, confiscated fortunes, ordered arrests, and tried to impose censorship, but no one on the planet paid any attention. The press stopped publishing their collaborations and their effigies. Politicians had to find honest occupations. Some became great comedians, others became good witch doctors. The reality was more complex than this summary.

Jorge Luis Borges, Utopia of a Tired Man

The might of Russia will increase through Siberia and the Arctic Ocean.

M. Lomonosov

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Russia conceives of itself as a great power between the West and Asia. It is one of the few great powers to have a noun "*velikoderzhavnost*" – greatpowerness - to define its status and position in the world. This 'greatpowerness' is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making. Similarly, *Asiatic Russia*[1] is a prime component contributing to national identity as Russia is conceived as a great power between Western and Asian countries. Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has established a long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Asiatic Russia, and advance its integration into Northeast Asia.

Being at the confluence of two worlds – East and West – has had long-term influence on how Russia has thought of its national identity, in particular prompting the question: to what extent is it joining or resisting these two worlds? The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were both attempts to overcome this identity issue and deal with its contradictions. After a period in the first era after the collapse of the Soviet Union when it seemed that Russia would opt for membership of the Western world, the identity question has reappeared with new vigour in the twenty first century.

Russian national identity is highly complex therefore and historically changeable. It is made of various components, some of which are internally driven and some externally

[1] This work uses the term Siberia in its broadest definition and historical use, which comprises all Asiatic Russia. The thesis uses interchangeably the terms Asiatic Russia and Siberia to refer to the whole territory of Russia in Asia. Only when it is considered necessary do the research refers to the specific sub-regions: Siberia, the Russian Far East, the Arctic. In those definitions, Siberia comprises: Altai Krai, Altai Republic, Buryat Republic, Irkutsk Oblast, the Republic of Khakassia, Kemerovo Oblast, Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Kurgan Oblast, Novosibirsk Oblast, Omsk Oblast, Tomsk Oblast, the Tuva Republic, Tyumen Oblast, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Zabaykalsky Krai; the Russian Far East: Amur Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Kamchatka Krai, Khabarovsk Krai, Magadan Oblast,Primorsky Krai, Sakha Republic, Sakhalin Oblast; the Arctic: Russia's Arctic coast and Russia's territory above the Arctic Circle. (See Appendix V, pag. 345)

driven. Arguably, one of the most important long-term factors influencing identity was Russian expansion into Northern Asia with the conquest of Siberia. The expansion of Russia to the Pacific coast transformed the country, from a landlocked eastern European state into an immense, multi-ethnic, and bi-continental empire. This great expansion fed into the Russian national idea and reinforced the necessity to be a great power from the era of Peter the Great onwards. However, Russia has been a different kind of great power at different points of history.

As the construction of the Russian state has combined external and internal factors, European and eastern values, history and politics were intermixed with Russia's own values, history, and politics. The European vector of Russia's foreign policy has always been the strongest; the Asian vector, however, has always been present and at various points could be seen as exerting some influence on Russian self-perception. Russia's conceptualisation of Siberia, and in particular its role in shaping foreign policy in Asia, has always been multifaceted. Internal factors and ideas suggested Russia should become a European, Imperial or Communist state, whereas external ideas, geographical settings and perspectives, and international political processes forced Russia to adapt and evolve its foreign and security policies to reflect its position between Asia and the West. Therefore, the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia often pointed in different directions – territorial expansion, isolation, or integration – at different times.

This thesis pursues a research study focusing on these problems: Russia's insistence on its great power status and the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia as a key demand of national identity. The thesis tries to explain how Russian foreign policy reflects this; but also how Asiatic Russia remains a central element defining and promoting this national identity and its quest for great power status. This thesis aims to examine how the aforementioned ideas relate to the apparent necessity of Russia to develop Asiatic Russia and integrate it into Northeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region, pointing out to the dilemmas between cooperation and security issues. As pointed out the function and perception of Asiatic Russia has never been exclusively internal or external but has always arisen out of the interaction of the two. Therefore this thesis does not only study changes in Asiatic Russia in the post-Soviet period; but also the new external conditions in Northeast Asia.

1.1. Topic: Russia, Asiatic Russia, and Northeast Asia

What is Asia to Russia? Russians have conceptualised 'the East' in multiple ways. The East is relevant because since the seventeenth century the bulk of the Russian landmass has been located in Asia, a territory that has been historically been known as *Siberia.* Fyodor Dostoyevsky famously asked in 1881 just before he died: 'What is Asia to us? Why should we go there?' In *Geok-Tepe. What is Asia to Us?* he synthesises the complex and ambivalent attitudes of the Russian elite towards Asia in the nineteenth century:

> [O]ne can hardly maintain that our society has a clear conception of our mission in Asia, what specifically she means to us in the future. Generally speaking, our whole Russian Asia, including Siberia, still exists to Russia merely in the form of some kind of appendix in which European Russia has no desire to take any interest. "We are Europe," – it is implied. – "What is our business in Asia!" (Dostoyevsky, 1949:1043–1045)

To the question "What is Asia to us?" Dostoyevsky, like other Russian authors, responded that Russians lacked an idea of what Asia meant to Russia. He observed that in the minds of Russians, Siberia was a sort of Russian appendix that had little interest for them. Similarly, he felt that Asia was a land still to be discovered by Russians. He claimed that Russians did not possess a clear conception of their mission in Asia and he urged his country to find a place for Siberia and Asia and to understand the mission of Russia in Asia. Dostoevsky defined the problem in this way:

> This is necessary because Russia is not only in Europe but also in Asia; the Russian is not only a European but also an Asiatic. In our future destinies Asia is, perhaps, our main outlet! Moreover, Asia, perhaps, holds out greater promises to us than Europe. We must banish the slavish fear that Europe will call us Asiatic barbarians, and that it will be that we are more Asiatic than Europeans. This fear that Europe might regard us as Asiatics has been haunting us for almost two centuries. (Dostoyevsky, 1949:1043–1045)

For historical and geographical reasons, Dostoyevsky noted, Russia is not only European but Asian. Therefore, he called on Russia to use the benefits of being a bi-continental civilisation and come nearer to Asia. He did not reject Russia's European roots or call for Russia to distance itself from Europe. Indeed, he called Europe a 'mother': "We (Russians) should not abandon Europe completely. Nor is this necessary [...] Europe, even as Russia, is our second mother. We have taken much from her; we shall again take, and we shall not wish to be ungrateful to her". (Dostoyevsky, 1949:1043) He perceived, however,

that Asia 'held out greater promises' to Russia than Europe and in the future it could become Russia's 'main outlet'. Finally, he appealed to Russians to remove the fear that Europe would call them 'Asiatics' if they moved towards Asia.

As Dostoyevsky's ideas suggest Russia is at the confluence of two civilizations, East and West, and Russians have sought to define their place in the world in relationship to both. As Ermishina notes: "The main reason of the occurrence of a question on the definition of a place of Russia is the old opposition of the East and West as different civilization types". (Ermishina, 2009:7) Thus the quest to define Russian national and international identity is inextricably connected to the location of Russia between East and West. Nicolai Gvosdev (2007:8) observes that Russia is culturally a European country and "in its genesis part and parcel of European civilisation" but "for reasons of geography and history forms a special subdivision of the European world". In this situation Russia has developed its own ties with Asia. In this regard, Milan Hauner (1990:15) observes that "Because of the unique amalgam of history and geography which blended the European and Asian portions of the Russian Empire, the Russians have long claimed a close and intimate relationship with Asia." In his book *What is Asia to Us?* Hauner questions the Russian perception and interaction with Asia, as Dostoyevsky did more than one hundred years before:

> What does Russia seek in Asia? Why did the Russians colonize it in the first place, and why do they still cling to the vast and empty stretches of inhospitable Asian territory? Are they interested in the riches of Siberia? Are they still seeking a warm-water outlet to alleviate their major strategic handicap? Do they see themselves still as a nation with a mission to perform in Asia? (Hauner, 1990:13)

However, when Dostoyevsky asked 'What is Asia to Russia?' in 1881 he felt the region was important for Russia but there was no doubt that Europe was 'the centre of the world'. In the 21st century it is often argued that the geographical centre of gravity in international politics and economics is moving away from Europe and the Atlantic world to the Asia-Pacific region (Walton, 2007; CSCAP, 2010; Kizekova, 2011) as this region has such a combination of wealth, resources, territory and strategic geography. (Walton, 2007)

> The shift of the world development to the Asia-Pacific region has been the mega trend of the past few decades. Asia-Pacific is becoming the engine of the world civilization – the role that Europe has been playing for the past five centuries. This is happening due to the region's economic upturn and the obvious crisis of the Euro-Atlantic idea of globalization. (CSCAP, 2010)

Northeast Asia - China, Japan, the Koreas, and Russia - is an Asian sub-region, which occupies a special place in the Asia-Pacific geopolitical and economic space, as it is an area where the interests of the largest and most influential countries in the Asia-Pacific region are closely interwoven. (CSCAP, 2010) In economic terms, it is one of the most dynamic regions in the world and it is home to four of the world's largest economies. In contrast to the growing economic interdependence in the region, the political and security situation in this area of the world is complicated and sensitive and tensions remain high. Moreover, the region lacks any multilateral institutional exchange mechanism. "Northeast Asia is one of the most complex, fragile regions in the global security landscape. The regional security dilemma is concentrated and intensive, and is generated by a complex and tangled mix of historical issues, ideological factors and disputes over real interests". (Chen, 2013)

The ongoing relocation of the world's affairs towards the Asia-Pacific region brings Asiatic Russia and therefore Russia closer to this new centre of gravity in international politics, security and economics. Russia is trying to engage with it by developing ties between Asiatic Russia and Northeast Asia. Under Putin´s presidency Russia has developed a new Asia-Pacific strategy that seeks to rebalance its foreign policy and integrate this with its main task of developing Siberia and the Russian Far East, and promoting economic and other linkages with Northeast Asia.

Additionally, Asiatic Russia is essential to Russia's great power ambitions. Great power thinking is a central element in Putin's Russia. Being a great power is seen by the Russian leadership as an essential condition for the very existence of the Russian nation. As President Putin said, "Russia can only survive and develop within the existing borders if it stays as a great power" (Putin quoted in Tsygankov, 2005:134). In this regard, Asiatic Russia takes on a critical role. Arguably, the conquest of the vast and resource rich territory of Siberia transformed the landlocked Tsardom of Muscovy from a relatively backward eastern European country into the powerful, vast and multi-ethnic Russian Empire. Similarly, it could be argued that the region was crucial in the rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower. Currently, Siberia is paramount in the Russian Federation's great power ambitions as it provides Russia with the territory, resources, and strategic location to claim this status. As a result of the ongoing shift in the world's centre of gravity from Europe to

Asia, Siberia has found itself for the first time not at the periphery but close to the core of international politics and economics. This situation brings enormous opportunities for Russia, but also significant challenges.

On the one hand, the abundance of natural resources of Asiatic Russia, its proximity to Asian markets and capital, and its strategic location between East and West, can serve Russia as a catalyst for huge economic growth and strengthening its position in international affairs. On the other hand, the serious problems that emerged in the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union such as the small and declining population, decaying infrastructure, low living standards, and poor climate investment, in addition to the region's huge distances and extreme cold weather, are factors that could seriously limit the economic growth of the region. The underdevelopment of an immense region rich in natural resources and far away from Russia's centre, with a small and declining population, and located in the most dynamic region in the world, constitutes a threat to Russia's national security. As Hauner observes, its double position, being European and Asian, appears to be a "massive advantage" to Russia, but also it seems to be a "massive problem". (Hauner,1990:32)

This thesis suggests that Asiatic Russia is not only becoming more important for Russia itself and its great power ambitions, but also for the Northeast Asian region, as China, Japan, and South Korea require a stable regional environment and secure supply of natural resources, which are essential for their prosperity and stability. In this regard, Russia and Siberia can play an important role if the conditions for integration and interaction can be developed. Therefore, it is important and worthwhile to pursue the study of Asiatic Russia and its place in Northeast Asia's regional affairs, not only to understand Russia's international position but for a better understanding of the future dynamics of the Northeast Asian region, one of the most important sub-regions in world affairs.

In addition, the topic seems to gain more relevance as Russia's confrontation with the West over the Ukraine and Syria evolves. Under Putin´s presidency the necessity of maintaining Russia's great power status and the necessity of maintaining good relations with the West were established and some progress was made. In the last three years, however, following the crisis in Ukraine, Russia began to reassess its relations with the West. According to Saint Petersburg scholar Alexander Sergunin: "We discovered that we

are going in different ways (from the West), we want to have a different type of societies, different political systems, different value systems. But it does not mean that Russia should back the West". (Interview 17) Consequently, it seems that Russia has to shift toward closer relations with Asian countries, and Asiatic Russia importance rises once again as a factor in this endeavour.

This thesis aims to understand the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asia. These questions will be pursued within the context of Russia's search for a great power identity. This thesis attempts to connect three aspects - national identity, geographical settings, and external strategy. This research tries to locate Asiatic Russia historically and geopolitically in Northeast Asia by looking at the way these three aspects have interacted across the changes in Russian statehood.

This thesis attempts to examine the link between the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia and their connection to Russia's great power dilemmas in Northeast Asia: the way in which Russia's geopolitics and internal ideas, on the one hand, and international political processes, on the other hand, determine the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asian countries

1.2. Theory and Methodology

Russia's foreign policy has been a difficult case for International Relations (IR) theories, as seemingly they have been unable to satisfactorily explain Russia's foreign policy. (Sergunin, 2016) It is often argued that the nature of the Russian state is *sui generis* and therefore IR theories are not applicable to Russia. Similarly, it is frequently said that in the case of Russia, awareness of history and culture are more important to understand Russia's foreign policy than any IR theory.

Russian theorists argue that it is a common mistake to analyse Russia's foreign policy through Western cultural lenses, not taking into account Russia's internal influences and ideas. IR theories are Western theories, originated and developed in the West by the West, and they have some limitations in approaching Russia, as they tend to ignore the

domestic factors and ideas on which Russia's foreign policy is grounded. (Tsygankov, 2010:13) As Tsygankov notes, (2011:3) IR scholarship is grounded in certain social conditions and often reflects ideological and cultural premises of Western culture. Having said that, there is no necessity to juxtapose empirical knowledge to theory, however. The fact that IR theories may not be applicable to fully understanding Russia's international behaviour does not mean that employing empirical knowledge or only Russia's own conceptions on international relations are sufficient to grasp Russian's foreign policy. Theoretical foundations cannot be ignored in any research on Russian foreign policy, as that would lack scientific credibility. A constant dialogue between empirical knowledge and theory is the precondition for any valid scientific research.

It should not be overlooked that there is a subjective element behind any scientific work, as scientists are human beings. watching, thinking, and interpreting the world. One of the main errors made in science is to adopt a pretence of total objectivity, that is, to believe that a researched issue can be kept intact from the research that is been made. (Merleau-Ponty, 1971) A theory or a theoretical framework cannot serve as an objective method for studying an object leading to correct results. (Leichtova, 2014:5) On the contrary, the theoretical framework should serve as an auxiliary construction that is intended to be appropriate for interpreting a specific phenomenon.

There are several theoretical approaches within Western IR that can be applicable to the study of Russian foreign policy. This thesis encompasses a variety of approaches and does not favour one approach over another, as they are not mutually exclusive. As Alexander Sergunin remarks: "Western IR theories can be applicable to Russia but only selectively, taking into account time and cultural context". (Interview 17)

The conceptual foundation of this work is established in academic discussions of identity and national identity. This thesis approaches the notion of identity from the standpoint of Hegel´s understanding of self-consciousness. According to Hegel, there is no identity by itself; personal identity is formed through the interaction of self-consciousness with other self-consciousnesses. On this basis, a parallelism can be drawn between personal identity and national identity. The fundamental condition of possibility for the existence of a self-consciousness is the existence of another self-consciousness. The same for states, the fundamental condition of possibility for the existence of any state is the existence of other

states. There is no identity that precedes the reality of any nation. On the contrary, national identity is constructed only through interaction with other nations. Consequently, this thesis does not explain foreign policy solely as a state-centric phenomenon in which the state, which has an a priori identity, responds to external economic, ideological, military, or political challenges.

A nation is not a homogeneous entity, however. Within a nation there are different groups and schools of thought which respond differently to international and local conditions and experiences and try to connect foreign policy and national identity. Each group has its own conception of national identity and the relationship of the nation with the international order. Within Russia, these groups have intensely debated the place of Russia in the world by linking culture, history, and beliefs with current affairs in the international arena. The majority of these groups have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Therefore, this research briefly engages with literature on great power identity in general and in the Russian context in particular. By the same token, it analyses Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power.

This thesis takes great power identity as a central element of Russian national identity and one of the main drivers of Russia's foreign policy. Hanna Smith (2016) argues that *greatpowerness* is a uniting factor both within the Russian leadership and most of the population and between both groups. Nevertheless, as it will be explained in the following chapters, this uniting factor provoke numerous confrontations and discrepancies when it comes to the country's foreign policy in general and Russia's relations with priority partners, in our case China, Japan, and South Korea.

Russian foreign policy is often seen in IR through the lens of realism as it is framed within the framework of great powers' politics. Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power suggests that the majority of the Russian elites view international affairs mostly in realistic terms, as they place special attention to security concerns and other issues such as the necessity to advocate for a multipolar world order, to oppose US hegemony in international affairs, and to maintain spheres of influence in the former Soviet states (FSU). (Ziegler, 2012:412) The Russian leadership takes the realistic perspective that a great power is a nation that has great material power and the ability to project it. "Realism assumes that great powers value highly the components of sovereignty: freedom of

international actions including conducting war, exclusive authority over domestic affairs and recognition as a legitimate international actor". (Ziegler, 2012:402)

Nevertheless, Russia's foreign policy and in particular its policy in Northeast Asia cannot be explained exclusively through realism, as it neglects the possibility of a close nexus between cooperation and the country's reassertion of great power status. Balance of power and spheres of influence are not the only driving forces behind Russia's international behaviour in Northeast Asia. "Realism seems to work when the actual policies at play are zero-sum in nature, but it errs when the zero-sum reality is not in place." (Tsygankov, 2010:11)

In addition, it seems that theories such as realism or rational choice cannot satisfactorily explain the motivations behind foreign policy elites. Sergunin argues that "Motivation of foreign policy elites cannot by explained just by rational factors; rational in the sense of cost and benefits." (Interview 17) According to him, theories based on rational thinking "have failed to satisfactorily explain Russian foreign policy, not only under Putin's presidency but historically." (Interview 17) The Russian scholar believes that Russian foreign policy at times has been emotional rather than rational, and historical events can corroborate this: Russia's participation in the Holy Alliance after the Vienna Congress and the later military intervention in Hungary, Russia´s behaviour during its participation in the Trilateral alliance in the First World War, the Soviet military campaign in Poland in 1944 – in all these events the emotional part played an important role, as the motivations and benefits behind Russia's actions were not clear at all. (Interview 17)

In a similar way, Russian foreign policy under Putin's administration is sometimes emotional rather than rational. In the words of Sergunin: "Putin's behaviour in the case of Turkey was completely emotional. In the case of Ukraine, he has been rather emotional than rational, he did not have a master plan behind the takeover of Crimea, its response to Maidan was completely emotional." (Interview 17) In explaining Russia's international behaviour, concepts such as pride, dignity, and self-esteem play an important role. The Russian leadership is not only motivated by rational thinking as emotional reactions also play an important role.

Therefore, whereas paying attention to Russia's great power identity is important, it seems that theories coming from social psychology such as constructivism add value to the

discussion, as they focus on the motivations that the Russian elites may have in pursuing a specific foreign policy. Constructivist approaches, for instance, focus on the issue of Russia's post-Soviet identity, and the role of culture, history, and present elites' view of the world in Russia's foreign policy construction. The constructivist approach underlines the necessity of examining the cultural context in which foreign policy takes place, making identity a central element of that approach. The role of culture and historical interpretation is important for understanding Russia's foreign policy. This thesis takes elements of constructivism to analyse Russia's national identity in general and great power identity in particular. This approach seems to offer good insight into Russia's foreign policy in Northeast Asia and its security dilemmas.

'Soft power' is a notion that is applicable to describe some features of Russia's foreign policy under Putin, and can be used to explain some of the issues regarding Russia's present day international standing in Northeast Asia. Particularly under Putin, Russia has tried to find strategic alternatives to 'hard power' policies. With the help of soft power elements, Russia aims to foster economic, political and socio-cultural integration in Northeast Asia. Russia tries to present itself as a great power by using not only hard power forms but also by using soft power elements. According to Joseph Nye, the three main aspects of soft power are: attractiveness of diplomacy, attractiveness of political system, and attractiveness of culture. (Sergunin, 2016:56) Soft power is a rather broad concept, which is widely used in IR but has no agreed upon definition. As Sergunin observes, the "in the West there are different visions of soft power and not just Nye's". (Interview 17) To facilitate the analysis, this thesis defines Russia's soft power as the way in which Russia tries to present itself in Northeast Asia as a responsible, reliable, and attractive partner.

'Geopolitics' is another term widely used in explaining Russia's international behaviour. As Magda Leichtova observes: "The geopolitical method of orientation in the international system accurately corresponds with the Russian concept of its own identity-which is a state previously, more closely connected with geographical location and the physical aspects of the existence of the Russian state." (Leichtova, 2014:18) According to Leichtova, "A basic requirement for analysing Russian foreign policy is the acceptance of the geopolitical method of viewing and interpreting the international system." (Leichtova, 2014:18) It is a difficult task to give an appropriate definition for geopolitics, however. One

of the reasons is that the term is overused; that is, the term is constantly used in the media and by political actors without giving a proper definition. Another reason is that in academic literature too many definitions are provided and a consensus on a definition is hard to be reached. Colin Dueck (2013) argues that geopolitics is "the analysis of the relationship between geographical facts on the one hand, and international politics on the other. These geographical facts include natural features, such as rivers, mountains, and oceans along with elements of human and political geography, such as national boundaries, trade networks, and concentrations of economic or military power." Samuel Cohen (2003) defines geopolitics as the "analysis of the interaction between, on the one hand, geographical settings and perspectives and, on the other hand, political processes. (…) Both geographical settings and political processes are dynamic, and each influences and is influenced by the other. Geopolitics addresses the consequences of this interaction." According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015) geopolitics is "a study of the influence of such factors as geography, economics, and demography on the politics, and specially the foreign policy of a state." As it can be observed, in all definitions politics and geography play an essential role. In this work geopolitics is defined as the study of how culture, history, politics, and economics of one country/region are related to its geographic realities (physical and human). Evidence chapters of this thesis study of the way in which Siberia's territory, position, resources, and population influence Russia's foreign policy and power and its relationship with Northeast Asia. Similarly, especial attention is paid to the geographical realities of China, South Korea, and Japan, and how they influence the approach of these countries to Russia and Siberia. Geopolitics is based on the idea that any study of a region or a nation cannot be separated from its geographical reality; geography becomes crucial on its understanding. In Chapters Three and Four it is shown how geography has played a crucial role in Russia's history and in Russia's struggle for identity.

Indeed, there are various IR theories or notions that may be suitable to explain Russia's present-day international affairs. These theories or concepts are complementary rather than mutually exclusive and some of them are used for the purposes of this thesis. They are used as appropriate, depending on the research objectives and context. Nevertheless, all these approaches have come into existence outside Russia, and therefore internal factors should not be ignored. As Alexander Sergunin remarks:

> A lot of specific factors are inherent to Russia, culture, the society, and the idea of a big country with a rich history. The main mistake done by some theories is that do not take into account historical, cultural factors, and the emotional part of foreign policy. Foreign policy is not neutral, made by robots. It is made by people, with their own views, and all this affects foreign policy making. (Interview 17)

In this sense, this research pays especial attention to the historical and cultural factors on which Russian identity is grounded, as internal ideas play an important role. As Hanna Smith emphasises, a common denominator for most of the academic research on Russian national identity is the idea that Russia's foreign policy making has a strong domestic base. (Smith, 2016:126)

In Chapter Two, this research examines historical intellectual debates on Russian identity. Foreign policy debates in Russia and Russian foreign policy as a whole respond to the old debate on Russia's identity and on Russia's place in the world. Discussions in Russia on international relations are actively shaped by the different Russian schools of thought. "Although Russia's thinking and policy responds to various international contexts, it has also displayed a remarkable degree of historic continuity". (Tsygankov, 2010:63) Thus, by exploring the history of Russian thought in the last two centuries this thesis provides a framework for understanding Russian debates on foreign policy.

In the second part of Chapter Two the development of Russian schools of thought on international affairs from the 1990s is examined. It is argued that the Russian schools are grounded on three major traditions: *Westernism, Neo-Eurasianism,* and *Pragmatic Eurasianism*. Each of these highlights different categories to explain the identity of Russia as a nation and consequently the type of foreign policy it should pursue. These traditions emerged after the demise of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, they are grounded on the history of Russia's relationship with Europe and on the old debate on Russian identity and Russia's place in the world. These traditions try to show Russia's foreign policy in accord with their view of Russia and the world and the way these traditions show a continuance with the schools of thought that have developed in Russia in the last two hundred years. "Russian IR theory after the Soviet break-up is only new in the sense that it represents a new form of framing reality, yet behind the new concepts, one can recognize the same old debate about the Russian idea that had been introduced by the Westernizer/Slavophile polemics in the mid-19th century". (Tsygankov, 2010b:672) Russian identity is made of

internal and external components and its different schools on foreign policy have tried to connect them to formulate an appropriate foreign policy.

One of the main objectives of this work is to link Russia's foreign policy in Northeast Asia to its material and power capabilities, and to internal ideas based on identity. This thesis does not try to emphasise one aspect at the expense of others; that is, material and power capabilities over identity issues, or vice versa.

As has been said, this thesis attempts to answer the following question: What is the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asia in the context of Russia's great power identity? Russia conceives of itself as a great power, and therefore tries to behave as such. As a great power, what does Russia want in Northeast Asia? What are Russian ambitions in Northeast Asia, and what role does Siberia play in this endeavour? Before proceeding to explain the foundations of what we call Russia's great power ambitions, it seems absolutely necessary to define what *ambition* is.

In the English language, the words *ambition* and *aspiration* are often used interchangeably and in some cases both seem to have the same meaning. If we look into the definitions, however, there is seemingly a subtle difference in meaning between both words. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2016), *ambition* is "a strong wish to achieve something. [...] A strong wish to be successful, powerful, rich, etc..." The Oxford Dictionaries (2016) defines *ambition* as "a strong desire to do or achieve something, typically requiring determination and hard work." Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2016) characterises *ambition* as "an ardent desire for rank, fame, or power" and as "a desire to achieve a particular end." Finally, *ambition* is defined by the Macmillan Dictionary (2016) as "something that you very much want to do, usually something that is difficult to achieve."

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *aspiration* as "something that you hope to achieve." (2016) Similarly, the Oxford Dictionaries characterises *aspiration* as "a hope or ambition to achieve something." (2016) According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary *aspiration* is "a strong desire to achieve something high or great." (2016) Finally, *aspiration* is defined by the Macmillan Dictionary as "something that you want to achieve, or the wish to achieve something." (2016)

We find that *ambition* is generally referred as a strong/ardent wish/desire to achieve something that is strongly desired or difficult to achieve such as success, power, or richness, whereas aspiration is usually described as something that is wanted/hoped to achieve. Thus, the connotation of the word *ambition* is that of something much more difficult to achieve and therefore strongly desired. Moreover, ambition is used in a broader perspective, whereas aspiration is related to smaller goals or wishes. Consequently, for the purpose of this thesis I use the word *ambition* and not *aspiration* to define Russia's urge to be a great power.

1.2.1. Sources

The evidence for this research was drawn primarily from the following categories of sources:

(1) Books and book chapters produced by thinkers and scholars. This category of sources can be divided into four groups. Only those which have more relevance for this thesis are mentioned.

The first group of works examines the construction of Russia's national identity and foreign policy (Campbell, 1998; Clunan, 2009; Hopf, 2002; Leichtova, 2014; Neumann, 1996; Sergunin, 2016; Smith, 2016; Tsygankov, 2010; Ziegler, 2012; among others).

The second group of books deals with the Russian identity issue (Berdyaev, 1947; Berlin, 1978, 2004; Billington, 2004; Hauner, 1990; Laruelle, 2008; Leatherbarrow, 2010; Lewin, 2005; McDaniel, 1996; Neumann, 1996; Sergunin, 2016; Tsygankov, 2010; among others).

The third group of books describes Russia's conquest, colonization, and settlement of Siberia and the role of the region in Russia's national identity (Bobrick, 1992; Chatterjee, 2009; Conolly, 1975; Fisher, 1943; Gaddy, 2003; Lincoln, 1994; March, 1996; Naumov, 1996; Raeff, 1956; Treadgold, 1956; Wood, 1991; among others).

Finally, another group of works examines Russia's foreign policy in Northeast Asia and Russia-Northeast Asia regional ties (Akaha, 2014; Azizian, 2012; Bae, 2010; Bassin, 2016; Blank, 2010, Blank, 2011; Bradshaw, 2001; Bukh, 2010; Cadier, 2015; Iwashita,

2005; Kimura, 2008; Kuhrt, 2007; Lee, 2014; Lukin, 2013; Wilson, 2009; Zhebin, 2014; among others).

(2) Governmental documents, publications, and official data from federal sources such as the Federal State Statistics from the Russian Federation; Japan Trade and Investment Statistics; the Korean Culture and Information Service, the Korea Customs Service; the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia; the Ministry of Strategy and Finance of Japan; and the President of Russia. Other sources include the Energy Information Administration, Gazprom, and Rosneft.

The return to power of Putin in 2012 coincided with the accession to power of President Xi in China, Prime Minister Abe in Japan, and President Park in the Republic of Korea. Putin held summit meetings in 2013 with his counterparts from China, Japan, and South Korea. Therefore, special attention is paid to the three joint declarations released after the summit meetings which, being the first between these leaders, held great importance because they set the terms for the development and improvement of bilateral ties in the mid-term.

(3) Academic Journals. A large number of academic articles and papers were consulted for purposes of this research. The following journals have been most helpful: *Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Europe-Asia Studies, Foreign Studies, Ojkumena, Pacific Review, Russia in Global Affairs, Post-Soviet Affairs, Problems of Economic Transition, Yaponiya Nashikh Dnei,* etc.

(4) News resources. Diverse news resources were consulted for this research. Among newspapers the following can be mentioned: *Alaska Dispatch, Asahi Shimbun, Barents Observer, China Daily, China Post, Korea Herald, Financial Times, Global Times, The Guardian, Hankyoreh, The Hindu, Japan Times, The Korea Times, Korean Joongang Daily, Moscow Times, New York Times, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Shanghai Daily.* Similarly, online articles from news agencies, including *RIA Novosti, RT, Sputnik, TASS, and Xinhua* are part of the database for this research. Particular attention was paid to current-affairs magazines and news resources such as *the Beijing Review, The Diplomat, Eurasia Review, Russia Beyond the Headlines, Russian Analytical Digest, Russia Direct.*

(5) Think tanks have been one of the most helpful sources for this research: *Carnegie Moscow Center,* the *Russian International Affairs Council,* the *International Institute for Strategic Studies,* the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute,* and the *Valdai Discussion Club.* These think tanks publish articles, occasional papers, books and proceedings of the conferences sponsored by them. In the case of Russia, these think tanks' publications are important in order to examine the connection between academia and decision-makers and how the Russian leadership is provided with foreign policy expertise, with some of the authors taking part in foreign policy making itself.

It should be mentioned that in order to obtain information on social issues and public opinion, this thesis consulted the following polling and social research organizations: Levada Centre, Russia Votes, and the Pew Research Center.

(6) Interviews with experts and scholars. This is one of the most important categories of sources for this thesis. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted for the purposes of this research. Since the beginning of this project it was established that it was necessary to conduct fieldwork in the case study countries and regions. Therefore, two short stays were scheduled: Russia in 2012 (Saint Petersburg, Moscow) and Northeast Asia in 2013 (Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, Vladivostok). The main objective of both stays was to undertake academic interviews with specialists in the field and to obtain information that could not be obtained otherwise in the United Kingdom. The Ethics Committee of the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, granted approval to conduct the abovementioned fieldwork. (See Appendix IV) Sixteen interviews were scheduled; however, only twelve could be accomplished at that time as not all the interviewees could assist. One of the main limitations for conducting this research was economic means, as neither Durham University nor my sponsor were able to provide financial support for the above-mentioned stays and therefore all the expenses had to be covered by the author of this thesis. Consequently, the period of the stays was very limited and could not include in 2013 a visit to the Republic of Korea or to the cities of Khabarovsk and Novosibirsk.

It should be mentioned that it was originally planned to write this thesis by comparing the perspectives of central elites and regional elites. Unfortunately, this plan had to be changed as during the fieldwork in 2013 it became apparent that not enough material

and information for such a doctoral thesis could be obtained under the given circumstances. Therefore, it was decided to write this thesis from a central-government perspective and to leave for a future research a comparison of central and regional elites' perspectives.

Another issue that should be noted is the fact that all the interviews had been conducted before the crisis in the Ukraine erupted in 2014. It was considered that the confrontation between Russia and Western countries which resulted from the annexation/reunification of Crimea and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine could have a direct impact on this research and, therefore, following the attendance of the author of this thesis at a conference in Saint Petersburg in April, 2015, it was decided to conduct a few more interviews in Moscow. Moreover, in 2014, several publications with high relevance for the topic of this research appeared, and therefore it was considered appropriate to corroborate this new information with experts in the field. Additionally, two more interviews were conducted in Saint Petersburg in September, 2016, in order to address some issues that this thesis had not properly addressed.

It should be highlighted that due to the circumstances not all the interviews (6, 7, 15, 16) could be recorded and therefore not all the interviews could be quoted. By the same token, interviews 1 and 14 could not be fully transcribed as for the quality of the audio. All interviews except three (5, 14,16, and 17) were conducted in Russian. Appendix IV includes a list of the interviews conducted for this research.

Another issue that should be flagged was the difficulty of interviewing some of the officials in the case study countries and regions during the research, in particular in the case of Russia and China. Therefore, to bring an analytical order to the research effort and help in organizing sources for comparative procedures it was decide only to interview academic and scholars. As a matter of fact, interviews can be subjective, and therefore, possible interviewees were carefully identified and selected based on their seriousness, their publications, their availability, and their real authority in the field. All this information from the selected academics was double-checked to be sure that they could provide valuable and reliable information. The interviews were in particular helpful in understanding the motivations behind Russian foreign policy and relations between different academic groups and schools, in particular those with interviewees from Russia and China.

It is not an easy task to deal with such a diverse, separated database. Different problems, such as comparability, classification, and systematization of sources unavoidably come into existence. Therefore, this research examined the different sources and compared them with each other to validate their information value. Similarly, this thesis has selected sources which could properly represent different views and reflect different positions. In evidence chapters, preference has been given to original rather than secondary sources in order to reduce the risk of creating an inadequate image of the object.

1.3. Research Questions

Accordingly, this thesis is based around four specific research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

1. How is Russian national identity constructed? What role does the idea of Russia being a great power play in Russia's national identity? How is this reflected in Russia's foreign policy construction?

The first research question (RQ1) is the conceptual one and it is answered in Chapter Two. This chapter looks into the internal and external components from which Russian identity is made, in particular the idea of greatpowerness, and the role they play in Russia's foreign policy.

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

2. What has been the rationale behind Russia's conquest, colonization, and later development of Asiatic Russia (Siberia/Russian Far East/Arctic)? What is Siberia to Russia?

The second research question (RQ2) examines what Asiatic Russia is to Russia. Chapter Three looks to answer how historically Russia has conceptualised Siberia and in particular its role in foreign policy. Similarly, it attempts to describe how the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia have pointed in different directions. Chapter Four

looks into the internal geopolitics of Asiatic Russia to understand the place of the region in Russia´s national identity and foreign policy making.

Research Question 3 (RQ3)

3. What is the state of the overall relations between Russia and Northeast Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea)?

The third research question (RQ3) seeks to understand the state of relations between Russia and Northeast Asian and how the idea of Russia as a great power between the West and Asia is reflected in Russia´s relations with Northeast Asian countries. To address this question, the second section of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven examine the political and economic determinants of the relationships between Russia and China, Japan, and South Korea, respectively.

Research Question 4 (RQ4)

4. What is the contrast between Russia's regional political-security perspectives on the one hand and economic integration perspectives on the other? What role does Russia's great power identity play in Russia's relations with Northeast Asian countries? What are the perspectives for cooperation in the Arctic?

The fourth research question (RQ4) looks to examine the link between the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia and their connection to Russia's great power dilemmas in Northeast Asia. Relations at a regional level are inextricably connected to the overall bilateral relationships between Russia and Northeast Asian countries and therefore cannot be viewed as a separate issue. To address this question, sections three and four of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven describe the way in which Russia's geopolitics and internal ideas, on the one hand, and international political processes, on the other hand, determine the way in which the external relations of Asiatic Russia with Northeast Asian countries are conducted.

The above questions look to understand the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asia in the context of Russia's great power identity.

1.4. Thesis Organisation

The structure of this thesis is determined by the research questions posed above. Following this introductory chapter where the research agenda is defined, sources, and the structure of the thesis is described, it is divided into seven chapters:

Chapter Two establishes the starting points which are the more accordant to the research and objectives of this thesis. It establishes the methodological and conceptual foundations in academic discussions of identity and national identity in general and of Russian national identity in particular. Chapter Two outlines the three main schools of thought on foreign policy within Russia and how each of them have attempted to formulate a national identity in order to legitimise the country's foreign policy. This chapter pays particular attention to Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power and how Russia under Putin has developed this idea as a central unifying factor among the elites and the population.

Chapter Three examines Russia's expansion and colonisation of Siberia. It makes an overview of the different periods of Russia's history in Siberia and the North Pacific, and the economic history of each period. In each time span, the geographic and historic context is noted. Chapter Three looks into Russia's conceptualisation of Siberia and explain how its role in foreign policy in Northeast Asia has always been multifaceted. This chapter demonstrates how the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia often pointed in different directions – territorial expansion, isolation, or integration – at different time.

Chapter Four attempts to answer the question: What is Siberia for Russia? It describes Siberia's main features and the position of the region within the new international order and it examines the current economic and security issues of Asiatic Russia, putting emphasis on the opportunities and concerns perceived by the Russian authorities and the leading Russian scholars of international relations. Chapter Four explains the way in which Siberia symbolises Russia's opportunities and vulnerabilities: Siberia's vastness, richness, and vulnerabilities epitomises the difficulty of controlling territory and integrating it into a broader region. By the same token, it describes the close interconnection between the internal and external geopolitics of Siberia.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are the case studies. The Chapters are devoted to relations between Russia and Northeast Asia: China, Japan, and South Korea respectively; and the place of Asiatic Russia within the overall bilateral relationships. Each chapter describes the background to present bilateral relations and reviews the political and economic determinants of the bilateral ties. Then, each chapter focuses on bilateral relations at a regional level, and the position of Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic within the bilateral ties. In order to bring an analytical order to the research effort and organizing sources for comparative procedures, it was decided to divide each of these sections into three parts: security-political issues, economic issues, and the Arctic, focusing on how the situation is seen from a central government perspective. Evidence chapters are largely empirical and descriptive in order to demonstrate the link between the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia and their connection to Russia's security dilemmas in Northeast Asia.

The second part of this thesis discusses the dilemmas arising as a result of contradictions between the internal geopolitics and external geopolitics of Siberia. Similarly, it analyses Russia's security concerns in NEA and the diverse partnerships it is promoting with Northeast Asian countries: China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, focusing the discussion on Russia's problems with security and development and the implications of the involvement of NEA countries in the context of Russia's great power identity.

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis. It makes brief conclusions about this topic and reflect upon the relevance of it. The chapter draws together and synthesises the conclusions from all previous chapters to answer explicitly the research questions. The chapter makes final conclusions and connects them to a broad historical context.

O, old world! While you still survive,
While you still suffer your sweet torture,
Come to a halt, sage as Oedipus,
Before the ancient riddle of the Sphinx!

Russia is a Sphinx. Rejoicing, grieving,
And drenched in black blood,
It gazes, gazes, gazes at you,
With hatred and with love!

Alexander Blok

CHAPTER TWO

Russia's National Identity and Greatpowerness

The self has no ontological condition of its own. There is no original self of primordial identity which exists a priori and to which the idea of otherness is added. Identity is always constructed through the interaction of the self with others. Similarly, there is no identity that precedes the reality of any nation. On the contrary, national identity is constructed only through interaction with other nations in history.

Being at the confluence of two worlds – East and West – has had long-term influence on how Russia has thought of its national identity, in particular prompting the question: to what extent is it joining or resisting these two worlds? The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were both attempts to overcome this identity issue and deal with its contradictions. After a period in the first era after the collapse of the Soviet Union when it seemed that Russia would opt for membership of the Western world, the identity question has reappeared with new vigour in the twenty first century. Russian national identity is highly complex therefore and historically changeable. It is made of various components, some of which are internally driven and some externally driven.

As any nation, Russia is not a homogeneous entity, however. Within a nation there are different groups and schools of thought which respond differently to international and local conditions and experiences and try to connect foreign policy and national identity. Each group has its own conception of national identity and the relationship of the nation

with the international order. Within Russia, these groups have debated with intensity the place of Russia in the world by linking culture, history, and beliefs with current affairs in the international arena.

The majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Similarly, the Russian leadership and most of its citizens believe that Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, territory and geopolitical location as the central power of Eurasia. This is, the status of great power is 'natural' for Russia and therefore should be treated as such by other powers. This chapter argues that Russia's self-perception of being a great power – greatpowerness - plays a central and defining role in Russia's foreign policy and critically shapes Russia's understanding of its relations with other power and regions.

This chapter is organised as follows. Firstly (1), it will establish the methodological and conceptual foundations in academic discussions of identity and national identity in general and of Russian national identity in particular. Secondly (2), it explores historical intellectual debates on Russian identity and the place of Europe on these debates. Thirdly (3), it examines the post-Soviet quest for identity and some of the main related features of the Russian Federation. Then (4) it outlines the three main schools of thought on foreign policy within Russia and how each of them sees Russia within the international order. This chapter pays particular attention to the concept of *great power.* Subsequently (5), it engages with literature on great power identity in general and in the Russian context in particular and discusses what makes a great power, particular attention is paid to the concept of *soft power*. Finally (6), this chapter analyses Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power and how Russia under Putin has developed this idea as a central unifying factor among the elites and the population.

2.1. National Identity

2.1.1. What is Identity?

The concept of *Identity* can be examined through several approaches; one of them is the ontological one. The *Law of Identity* (A = A) is an ontological principle according to which

"each thing is the same with itself" or "ens est ens". (Ferrater, 1994:1742) This idea of self-sameness is rejected by Hegel who considers that there is no abyss between object and subject, criticising thus the *philosophic tradition*. Hegel refutes the fact that in the *philosophic tradition* subject and object are seen as separate entities. Accordingly, there is neither an unintelligible world as conceived by Plato with his theory of Forms/Ideas nor Immanuel Kant's 'noumenon' or 'thing-in-itself'. Similarly, Hegel rejects the idea of *primordial identity*, thus equalling *Being* and *Nothingness*. There is no self-sufficient existence of external objects; that is, there is no objective reality as an independent domain. For Hegel, there is no objective reality outside of the consciousness that thinks of it.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel (2002) claims that there is no identity by itself, there is no original self of primordial identity which exists a priori and to which the idea of an other or the consciousness of otherness is added. That is, there is no ipseity or self-sameness. Thus, if there is no substantial or fixed identity of the self, how is the identity of the self constructed? Hegel considers that consciousness of the existence of an other is the fundamental condition of possibility for the existence of an individual self.

In the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel provides the basis for the succession of states of the self from consciousness to self-consciousness. These chapters describe the stages of consciousness which Hegel categorizes as *Sense-Certainty*, *Perception*, and *Force and the Understanding*.

The fourth chapter of *Phenomenology* discusses the birth of *self-consciousness:* the self-recognition of one's own other as an object for itself. In other words, self-consciousness is the consciousness of oneself as other. Self-consciousness therefore appears when the self talks to itself as if it were talking to an other and creates a moment in the consciousness that did not exist before. Self-consciousness is the possibility of the consciousness to reflect on what already occurred. Self-consciousness reflects on the world and itself by telling a story to itself as if it were telling a story to another.

Similarly, self-consciousness is only conscious of itself once it recognises another self-consciousness and it is recognised by it.

> Self-consciousness is therefore best defined as a movement, or better still as the double, simultaneous movement whereby consciousness steps out of itself, so to speak, and returns to itself continuously. In this infinite coming and going, self and other are both movements of self-consciousness and are both completely dependent upon each other: on the one hand, as if facing a mirror, consciousness can only

> acknowledge itself as self-consciousness by putting an other in front of itself, but that positing, in turn, is only possible because consciousness was already conscious of itself to begin with. (Ferro, 2013:3)

Hegel argues that self-consciousness is nothing more than the return of the consciousness from otherness; a conscious whose defining features lie outside itself in being recognized by other self-consciousness. Accordingly, identity is the negation of all otherness; identity is defined by what the self is not: not *I am I*, but *I am not another*.

The being has no essence and its identity is based on interactions with other self-consciousnesses. "What is here at stake is a new way of understanding the phenomenon of personal identity, radically opposed the idea of simple, tautological identity." (Ferro, 2013:6)

Identity is not something that can be taken for granted, but a never ending process in which it has to be conquered again and again, and which is determined not only by the self-consciousness but by other self-consciousnesses "The self is always the result of a process; it is itself a process, whose result is simultaneously a new starting point. Therefore personal identity does not represent, so to speak, a safe harbor or an individual refuge against the otherness of the outer world". (Ferro, 2013:9)

However, how do we make any distinction between myself and others? We distinguish because we have a *belief* that there is a substantial difference between *you* and *me*. But there is no substantial difference whatsoever. We have a *belief*, and this is the basis for making sense of the world. The self is the constant attempt to interpret others' actions. The self has sense only in relation to others. The world is just an explanation of what we see and believe. We have only beliefs about the world. To try to understand the world through stable ideas that do not change, is to understand nothing about what we call *world.* To name something is to distinguish it from something.

2.1.2. Construction of National Identity

Historically, people have struggled to define themselves in relation to others. Similarly, people have always had a sort of attachment to an in-group—a family, tribe, city, or nation. It could be said that the struggle for identity is inherent to any individual, to any society, to any nation; it is a way to explore where we come from, and who we are as humans and as

members of an in-group (Winchester, 2005). Both collective and personal identity are not given but constructed in relation to difference. "Whether we are talking of 'the body' or 'the state' or of particular bodies and states, the identity of each is performatively constituted. Moreover, the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an 'inside' from an 'outside', a 'self' from an 'other', and a 'domestic' from a 'foreign'." (Campbell, 1998:17)

The fundamental condition of possibility for the state is the existence of other states. There is no identity that precedes the reality of any nation. On the contrary, national identity is constructed only through interaction with other nations. In the words of Andrey Tsygankov:

> The very existence of the self becomes difficult without recognition from the Other. National identity therefore is a system of meanings that expresses the self's emotional, cognitive, and evaluative orientations toward its significant Other. The significant Other establishes the meaningful context for the self's existence and development and therefore exerts decisive influence on the self. (Tsygankov, 2010:15)

Thus, national identity is not only the self's view of itself but the result of how others view the self, with the self taking on the identity of itself projected by others. (Clunan, 2009:4) In Hegel's words, national identity is the product not of self-image but of others' image. To talk about one's nation is to talk about other nations. A nation is always the result of a process; national identity does not represent a safe refuge against the otherness of the outer world.

As any individual, the state has no ontological condition whatsoever, but various elements that constitute its reality, that is, its identity. As Campbell emphasises, there are no primordial and stable identities and the state is performatively constituted. (Campbell, 1998:13) Consequently, national identity is not something that can be taken for granted, but is a never ending process in which it has to be conquered again and again, it is the result of a process, but it is itself a process, whose result is simultaneously a new starting point. How is that identity constructed? Why does national identity have to be conquered again and again?

National identity is a construct of the state created for the purpose of legitimating itself as distinct. As happens to personal identity, people within a nation distinguish

because they have a belief that there is a substantial difference between its nation and other nations. But there is no substantial difference whatsoever. As Hegel noted in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we have a belief, and this is the basis for making sense of the world. The nation has sense only in relation to other nations. Therefore, national identity is a crucial organizing principle for justifying and providing coherence to the nation. (Sergunin, 2016:16) This is, the state precedes the nation and not the other way around. What is more, foreign policy helps to produce and reproduce the national identity that supposedly lies behind it. The identity of the people is the basis for the legitimacy of a state's foreign policy. (Campbell, 1998) In Hegel words, the world is just an explanation of what people within a nation see and believe. Thus, foreign policy constitutes a response to those people's beliefs as there are only beliefs about the world.

The question is not how the state's foreign policy serves the national interest, but how foreign policy helps to produce and reproduce the national identity that supposedly lay behind it. This national identity is constituted over time through a regulated process of repetition. National identity is historically written and re-written through foreign policy operations. (Campbell, 1998:20) Foreign policy is a way of legitimating the nation's beliefs.

A nation is not a homogeneous entity, however. Within a nation there are different groups and schools of thought which respond to international and local conditions and try to connect foreign policy and national identity. Each group has its own conception of national identity and the international order. Therefore, national identity is "a product of discursive competition among different groups and coalitions, drawing on different actions of the Other and interpreting contemporary international and local influences in a way that suits the groups' interests." (Tsygankov, 2010: 18)

Within the nation, political elites, in order to legitimise the country's foreign policy, tend to formulate a national identity from which the population can derive comfort. In this sense, Clunan argues that "[...] political elites are psychologically motivated to create identities that promote collective self-esteem." (Clunan, 2014:2) Different self-images of a country compete for dominance. These national self-images are evaluated through the historical aspirations of the country to assess their historical validity. According to Clunan (20014:285), "These national self-images are psychologically based on political elites'

collective historical aspirations and value rationality regarding their country's international status and domestic political purpose. Proponents promote national self-images through identity management strategies." Identity becomes highly contested among different groups and that conflict becomes 'specially intense' until one of the visions of the country become predominant. (Tsygankov, 2010:19) According to Anne Clunan, a national identity becomes dominant when these self-images and identity management strategies hold historical validity and can be successfully applied under prevalent conditions. Subsequently, the already dominant national identity determines the country's national interests and the foreign policy it should pursue. (Clunan, 2014:287)

In this regard, Russia's search for identity as a nation is similar to that of any other society, it is not an exception. Russia is an example of the world's collective attempt to find a fulfilling identity. (Winchester, 2005) There is a strong link between Russia's foreign policy and its search for identity. National debates on foreign policy have been a way in which Russia constructs its own identity and legitimises itself as a nation-state.

According to Alexander Wendt, identities of actors are formed within the international environment as well by domestic conditions. (Wendt, 1999:21) In this sense, Russian national identity is the result of external and internal factors; it is a never ending process of interpreting itself and the world. "Identity formation is a process shaped by past and present and by human reason – it is not fixed for all time, and it can be reduced monocausally neither to historical traditions and culture nor to present conditions." (Clunan, 2009:34) Russian national identity is always the result of a process; it is itself a process, whose result is simultaneously a new starting point. It is an explanation on how the Russian society and elites see the world. In the next part of this chapter, some of the internal and external factors/beliefs which form Russian national identity are examined. Similarly, it is described how different self-images of Russia competed for dominance following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2.2. Russian National Identity

For the reasons stated above, contemporary foreign policy debates in Russia and in the context of Russian foreign policy as a whole connect to older debates on Russia's identity

and on Russia's place in the world. Discussions in Russia on international relations are actively shaped by the different Russian schools of thought. Thus, the next section explores the history of Russian thought in the last two centuries to provide a framework for understanding Russian debates on foreign policy.

2.2.1. History, Culture, and Intellectual Identity Debates

Exploring the history of Russian thought in the last two centuries seems to be of paramount importance to understanding the modern Russian nation. "According to (Isaiah) Berlin, ideas 'played a greater and more peculiar role in Russian history than anywhere else', and the study of Russian thought can thus explain much more than we might expect about Russian behaviour." (Leatherbarrow, 2010:5) In the nineteenth century, as Alexander Lukin observes, there were no opinion polls and it was hard to determine public opinion, if it existed as a specific entity. At that time, "Russia was effectively divided into two different cultures: the elite and the rest." (Lukin, 2003:5) Only the elite was engaged in discussion about national identity. The Russian elite has sought to define a place in the world for themselves and has extensively discussed issues such as what it is to be Russian, the destiny of society, and the historic role of Russia among nations, or whether its social structure is *sui generis* or similar to any other. These debates of the Russian elite constitute a prelude to a new search for national identity that followed the demise of the Soviet Union. Faced with sudden changes, Russians have had to rethink their nation's place in the world, and the history of Russian thought serves as a framework for understanding contemporary Russian society.

Ideas have played an important role in the history of Russia. In order to understand today's Russia, it seems necessary to understand how its intellectual tradition has shaped the country's identity.

> Russian thinkers and writers have passed the same searching questions with unparalleled intensity: What is distinctive about Russians as a people? Where does the country fit into the scheme of world civilization? Are its culture and institutions a precious legacy to the rest of the world? A potential model for the future of mankind, or should what is distinctively Russian be abandoned in the name of a higher vision of progress? (McDaniel, 1996:10)

The modern conception of Russia as a single entity did not arise until the fifteenth century, just before Russia began its expansion into Siberia. From almost the very outset, Russia has been known for its size, for being an enormous country, bordering a variety of civilizations, very rich in nature, and with one of the harshest climates.

The role of religion has always been important. In the year 988 Vladimir the Great embraced Christianity, and by shaping a common religious identity he aspired to consolidate his rule over the diverse territories. During 'the Mongol yoke', Russia's contacts with the Christian world were weakened but not severed. After the fall of Constantinople, the Russian emperor Ivan II married Sofia Paleologue, the niece of Constantine, the Byzantium's last emperor, giving rise to the idea of Russia as the 'Third Rome'. The earliest formulation of this idea is attributed to the Monk Philotheus of Pskov, in the times of Vasily III. It seemed to him that after the fall of Constantinople, God wanted Russians to be the successors of the Byzantine Empire, the Second Rome, and thus the Tsardom of Muscovy was left as the only Orthodox reign on earth. According to the monk, the Russian Tsar "is the only Christian Tsar in the whole earth". (Berdyaev, 1947:8)

Neither religion nor size was enough at that time to shape a distinct Russian identity. "It [Russia] declared itself the 'Third Rome' but in many ways was an agricultural society dominated by folk and eastern traditions," (Winchester, 2005) and the idea of Russia being the successor of Byzantium was barely mentioned, even in the monastic culture.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a new understanding of European civilization in the European elite emerged and the idea of progress gained ground. European civilization began to be seen as moving towards perfection and freedom. (Lukin, 2003:2) The European path of development was seen as 'normal' in contrast to that in the rest of the world. Peter the Great, following this path and concerned about Russia's backwardness, and cultural, economic, military, and political disparities between Russia and the West, aspired to create a European Russia. "Peter's transformation was centered on the newly created Saint Petersburg, a truly mythical city; a pastiche of Europe's finest." (Winchester, 2005) The title of the rulers was changed from the Russian word tsar to emperor. The new European ideas impacted the Russian elite who began to see Russia as an integral part of Europe, however, this 'Europeanisation' of the elite increased the gulf

between the more European upper classes and the poor and isolated peasantry. The majority of the population was basically illiterate and enserfed peasants loyal to the tsar. "The Western culture of Russia in the eighteenth century was a superficial aristocratic borrowing and imitation. Independent thought had not yet awakened." (Berdyaev, 1947:17)

A sense of Russian national identity did not arise until the nineteenth century. (Winchester, 2005; Billington, 2004) In the sixteenth century, the empire began to expand and Russia started absorbing different peoples and russifying them. "Not until the nineteenth century was there any widespread consciousness that Russia had a distinct national identity defined by secular criteria such as ethnicity and language." (Billington, 2004:5)

The war against Napoleon and his later defeat in 1812 had an impact on the situation in Russia. During the war, the upper classes were in close contact with the 'common Russian culture' based on the Byzantine Orthodox tradition, and began to question Russia's 'Western path'. Indeed, a patriotic feeling emerged among educated Russians who tried to find a worthy part for Russia to play in the world. Its increasing material power led them to think that Russians were not as the Western European countries depicted them: "[…] a dark mass of benighted barbarians ruled by brutal despots and good only for crushing other freer, more civilized peoples." (Berlin, 2003:132)

The war deepened the desire to define Russia's identity and the way that it should relate to Europe. "The cultural question of Russian national identity arose in the nineteenth century in part out of the Russian aristocracy's social and psychological search for its own identity." (Billington, 2004:9)

In the 1830s during the aftermath of the Decembrist uprising "[…] the debate about Europe forced its way from the margin of public debate onto centre stage." (Neumann, 1996) The publication of the philosophical letter of Pyotr Chaadaev was central to this. In Chaadaev's letter to E.D. Pankova, written in 1829 and published in 1836, Chaadaev proclaimed that Russia had no history and no identity because all it had done was to copy others. (Schimmelpenninck, 2010:230) The government of Nicholas I claimed that Chaadaev was mad, and compelled him to write The Apology of a Madman. This event is considered the awakening of independent Russian thought. (Berdyaev, 1947:34) The Russian upper classes began to ask what Russia had been up to that day, and its future

destiny. That moment constitutes the beginning of a two century quest to define Russia's nature and historic destiny as a nation.

This awakening led to an outbreak of artistic creativity and literature and to more intense feelings of distinctiveness. The Russian upper classes found expressing ideas as the way of stating their own concerns; it was the only way for them to find a solution to the most pressing problems of their time. (Leatherbarrow, 2010:4) This educated class or *Intelligentsia* was an Europeanised educated elite that began to question the principles on which Russia had rested.

Intelligentsia is a Russian word and a Russian phenomenon; it cannot not be considered a synonym of 'intellectuals'. The word 'intellectuals' in the western sense refers to people possessing a highly developed intellect, united by an interest in ideas. The intelligentsia was elite of educated people united by a 'mission' to spread certain attitudes to life; they were Russian artists, writers, poets, and philosophers who did not want to entertain people or to debate among themselves, but to teach, and to transmute Russian society. They were preoccupied to the greatest extent by social and moral questions regarding Russian society. "It was a movement of educated, morally sensitive Russians stirred to indignation by an obscurantist church, by an oppressive state indifferent to the squalor, poverty and illiteracy in which the great majority of the population lived." (Berlin, 2003:83) The intelligentsia was interested in what they felt was most relevant to the future of Russia. It could be argued then, that the history of Russian thought says more about the moods and attitudes of the intelligentsia than about the 'common Russian people'. (Offord, 2010) As Leatherbarrow suggests, however, the perspectives of the intelligentsia are somehow responses to the political and social order, they are not general ideas, attitudes expressed independently of the circumstances. (Leatherbarrow, 2010)

After the publication of Chaadaev's letter, two positions on Europe polarised the debate: the 'romantic' idea and the 'constitutional' or western-oriented position. The terms 'Slavophiles' and 'Westernisers' respectively, were used to identify them.

The Slavophile-Westerniser debate constituted the first open discussion of Russian national identity, and the Western European vision was at the heart of this debate. Since Peter the Great's reforms, the West had become one of the main elements of Russian identity. (Tolz, 2010) Both Slavophiles and Westernisers agreed that Russia had a unique

role to play, outside that of Nicholas I's Russia, and they therefore opposed the 'official position'. (Berdyaev, 1947, Billington, 2004) Similarly, both struggled against the European perception that Eastern Europe and Russia was an intermediate zone between 'barbarism and civilisation', they wanted to 'broaden Europe' to include Russia. (Tolz, 2010:198) "The controversy between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers was a dispute about the destiny of Russia and its vocation in the world." (Berdyaev, 1947:39)

Slavophiles began to question the supposed Russian European identity; they stressed the uniqueness of Russia and the need to return to eastern and folk traditions. Slavophiles sought to create a society, an economy, and a government more in tune with what they considered the Russian reality and traditions. They began to think about how to modernise the country without simply imitating foreign models.

For the Slavophiles, Orthodoxy remained a quintessential aspect of Russian identity:' (Saunders, 2010:29) They thought that the Russian identity lay in religiosity, capacity of suffering, spiritual values, its paternalistic state, the peasant commune, and its cultural traits.

The intelligentsia sought to use the peasantry, which represented the majority of the Russian population in the nineteenth century. They identified the peasantry with the narod, who were depicted as the bearers of what was most distinctive in the Russian national character. They pointed out that the Russian upper classes should 'turn away from everything European' and look to the Russian narod for guidance. (Neumann, 1996:33)

Thus, a romantic conception of the narod was developed and the peasantry began to be seen as the moral utopia. "The Slavophiles looked upon the peasant commune as though it were one of the everlasting foundations of Russia and the guarantee of originality of Russia's own; they contrasted it with Western individualism." (Berdyaev, 1947:42)

In contrast, Westernisers emphasised individual freedom, openness to Western Europe, legality, rationality, science and individual rights. They thought that Russia should emulate Western institutions and criticised the unquestionable Russian acceptance of authority and tradition. Similarly, they saw Western Christianity in a positive manner: Europe and the reformatory side of Christianity was the only thing that could lead to great cultural and political achievements.

Westernisers did not 'idealise' the narod. They considered them as a poor educated mass that had to be 'enlightened, individualised' and civilised. Westernisers were sceptical about the peasant commune. Belinsky believed that they could only develop when "outstanding individuals rise above the mass and promote its subconscious needs." (Belinsky quoted in Offord, 2010:247)

According to Berdyaev, there were two different tendencies within Westernisers: the moderate and liberal, and the more revolutionary. The first group was interested in arts, German idealism and Romanticism. The second group was more concerned with social matters and influenced by socialist ideas. Both were influenced by Hegel´s philosophy (Berdyaev, 1947)

The new 'socialist path' was introduced in the second half of the eighteenth century by Alexander Herzen, who went beyond the classic debates between Westernisers and Slavophiles. Herzen, as Berdyaev notes, was a "Westerniser in another sense". (Berdyaev, 1947:62) He urged in Russia the revolution that Europe failed to carry out. Both Slavophiles and Westernisers rejected the 'socialist path' or 'socialist utopia'. Slavophiles saw the Socialists as representatives of Western rationalistic ideologies, and the great villains. Westernisers regarded Socialism as a 'failed ideology' that succumbed to Russian traditions of despotism and obscurantism. Herzen coincided with Slavophiles in the fact that the communality and the non-material interests of the *narod* embodied higher moral values than the "individualistic Western societies", however, he did not view the commune as an example of Christianity but as a basis for the "socialist utopia". (Offord, 2010:249) Herzen was the first of the Russian revolutionary emigrants.

With the October Revolution, Isaiah Berlin suggests, Russia chose to insulate itself further, and its development was more self-regarding and incommensurable with that of its neighbours. Berlin uses the word *insulate* and not *isolate*. He argues that the Soviet Union chose to *insulate* itself; it was ready to take part in international relations, but preferred that other countries abstain from interfering in its affairs. (Berlin, 2003) The USSR did not want to dissociate itself from the world; it wanted to *insulate* itself without being *isolated* from the world.

In the years following the revolution, Soviet thought was animated by the spirit of revolt against the arts of the West. (Berlin, 2003:3) They were Marxists and saw the

conflict with capitalism as inevitable. Relationships with Western countries were based on disapproval rather than suspicion.

The October Revolution was not a disruption however, as it is often described, but a continuance of the Russian debates of the nineteenth century. "The political rupture of 1917 and the ensuing consolidation of Marxism as a ruling ideology have long to obscure several important points of continuity with the past." (Tihanov, 2010:313) Questions of identity, culture and language were central both in both Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia. In 1922, the 'revolutionary mission' replaced the 'Christian mission' of the former empire. Communists rejected the past but replaced the old symbols by new ones such as the 'Third International' or the quasi-religious veneration of Lenin and Stalin. Milan Hauner observes that this was a symbiosis between the Orthodox Christian tradition and Great Russian nationalism, coexistence between the idea of Imperial Russian and Marxism-Leninism. And, "[…] the key element of Russian messianism was absorbed into the Western Marxist notion of the world proletarian revolution." (Hauner, 1990:28) Soviet Marxism was the 'new Russian idea' although it was not homogeneous. Following Lenin's death two main trends competed: the radicals supporting forceful methods of industrialisation, and the moderates advocating coexistence with the capitalist world.

"The idea that the Soviet Communist Party was leading a global revolutionary movement waned in the 1930s. An obligatory Russocentric view of history was introduced by Stalin to fortify the fading legitimacy of Soviet power based on communist ideology." (Billington, 2004:31) He searched for the preservation of the Bolshevik regime. The 'new communist idea' of Stalin was 'socialism in one country', an idea appealing to the necessity of sacrifices. "The view of Russian culture as centered on some vision of final goals has been always at the heart of the Russian idea." (McDaniel, 1996:35) In the 1930s,the new 'business' of the *intelligentsia* was not to interpret, argue or analyse Marxism, but to simplify and repeat it. In the Soviet Union as in Tsarist Russia, there was a big abyss between people and government. Russian common people tolerated this and retreated to their life. (Berlin, 2003:145)

Notwithstanding that for many decades the Russian debate was developed within the official Soviet version of Marxism, the debate existed between European supporters and advocators of Russian distinctiveness.

2.2.2. Russia's Main Other

It should be noted that the *West* is an essential component in understanding how Russians have perceived themselves throughout history. This constructed category has changed over time: 'the West' and 'Europe' were sometimes identified as one, but they can now be separated. "Through debating Russia's relationship to this constructed category, the Russian elite pictured Russia as a nation and as an empire, identified paths for their country's modernizing political, economic and social reforms, analysed the place of individual in society, and dwelt on the role of religion in the modern world." (Tolz, 2010:197)

Russia's status relative to the West is arguably the most important criteria in looking for a national identity. Historically, Europe/West is the significant *Other* in relation to which Russian identity is defined. (Neumann, 1996; Clunan, 2009, 2014; Tsygankov, 2010; Sergunin, 2016; Smith, 2015)

Historically, a combination of opposing and contradictory feelings toward Europe and the West has permeated Russian authors. Europe has been historically for Russia as source of both inspiration and threat. Russian elites want to be Europeans by their mode of life but at the same time try to assert their Russianness. (Sergunin, 2016:20) Isaiah Berlin (2003:2) argues that: "For a variety of causes Russia has in historical times led a life to some degree isolated from the rest of the World, and never formed a genuine part of the Western tradition; indeed her literature has at all times provided evidence of a peculiarly ambivalent attitude with regard to the uneasy relations between herself and the West." Russians tend to look to the West with a sort of admiration, but do not want to adopt Western economic and political practices. (Levada, 2016) It can be claimed that the majority of Russians want to find a balance between Russian culture and traditions and the outside influences, to keep their culture while opening themselves to the world, as M. Menshikov once advised breathing "only the best air from the West, 'while 'feeding ourselves only with the best milk from our own Mother Russia'." (Quoted in Billington, 2004:60)

The answers to the question of Russia being part of the West range from yes to no, using geographic, linguistic, political, cultural or institutional criteria, but generally the debate resolves in favour of Western civilization. The question was at the heart of the Westernisers-Slavophiles debate in the nineteenth century, however, the debate took place in a different Russian society. Post-Soviet Russia inherits Soviet modernisation and culture. Ermishina analyses the features of both worlds in order to better understand the mutual influences of East and West civilisations in Russia. In her view, the main difference between these civilisations was defined during the ancient world and, with some changes, exists even now. "For the eastern type during ancient time is indicative the development of culture of Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ancient India and Ancient China, and for the western type — Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome." (Ermishina, 2009:8) On this basis, features of the development of culture echoed both West and East. She opposes different categories and outlines differences between their political and economic systems, and between their culture and conceptions of power, gods, individuals and time. She concludes that "[...] at the doubtless presence of the east lines in Russian civilisation, within the interface of contrasts, Russia located at the border of western and eastern worlds, is in the western territory." (Ermishina, 2009:10) Metropolitan Kirill agrees, he argues that Western civilisation inherited Greek wisdom, Roman law and state traditions, all of them influenced by Christianity. He identifies Russia as part of a larger European civilisation, "Russian joined the family of European nations through Christianity." (Quoted in Gvosdev, 2007:135)

Nikolas Gvosdev (2007) introduces the term 'conditional membership' to portray the government's stance toward Europe. In this sense, Russia is culturally part of Europe and "in its genesis part and parcel of European civilisation" but "for reasons of geography and history forms a special subdivision of the European world". Thus, Russia is as European as France, England or Germany, however, it has evolved differently and its path "does not completely coincide with the West European and North American experiences". Consequently, Russia needs to pursue a 'balanced policy' because it is culturally European but geographically Eurasian. Alexander Lukin defines a 'balanced' policy as "[…] the belief that whilst Russia is a part of the West, it has different needs and interests given the peculiarities of its history, its size and geographic position as well as the fact that it is still

behind the West in many aspects." (Lukin quoted in Gvosdev, 2007:134) Conditional membership means that Russia is culturally European but not institutionally, it is in Russia's interests to integrate with Europe but not within Europe.

Russia's foreign policy depends to a great extent on relations with the West. The West is the main other which Russia always compares with. Relations with the West are the criteria for success or failure. Russia's relations with other countries are framed in terms whether they will strengthen or weaken the country's position toward the West. "The making of Russian foreign policy is dependent on what sort of political project its politically leading citizens want Russia to be. Since the fight about this is conducted as a question of how it should relate to Europe, ideas about Europe emerge as a key background determinant for both domestic and foreign policy." (Neumann, 1996: 4)

2.2.3. The New Russian Nation

The 1991 referendum in the Soviet Union showed that the majority of the population did not want to destroy the Union but be part of a "modified Soviet Union". After the proclamation of the 'independent Russia' at the Belovezhskaya agreement, however, the idea of "a Union of Independent States" was a mild statement of separation of Russia from the Soviet republics.

The demise of the Soviet Union constitutes one of the major crises of the entire history of Russia. (Billington, 2004; Tsygankov, 2003; Arbatov, 2006; McDaniel, 1996) The fall of the 'multicultural' Soviet state meant for millions of Russians "the catastrophic loss of their state and national identity". (Arbatov, 2006) Within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union there were no natural boundaries between the centre and the periphery. The capitals of St. Petersburg and Moscow performed the function of the centre, and all groups, including Russians, were subject to the imperial centre. That situation, as Zevelev remarks, deprived Russians of their ethnic identity. (Zevelev, 2009) Russians viewed the Soviet Union as their native land, whereas other ethnic groups did not; instead, they viewed their own ethnic republic as their homeland. That is why the USSR was the 'homeland of Russians'. "To be 'Soviet' indirectly meant being a Russian-speaker and acknowledging the 'civilising' mission of Russian culture and its extraterritorial nature throughout the

entire Soviet Union. (Zevelev, 2009) Consequently, the emergence of the Russian nation created a vacuum, a loss of identity. “After the establishment of the Russian Federation, not even Russian political elites knew how to define Russia’s role in the world and objectives in the international system.” (Leichtova, 2014:26) The Russian Federation is a new nation very different from Soviet Russia or Imperial Russia. “Russia is still at the stage of nation-building. It never existed within the current borders as an independent state or had such economy, system of government, administrative and societal organization.” (Sergunin, 2016:13)

This situation formed an ideological vacuum and various political forces appeared in the early 1900’s and defended their own view of the development of the country. Some viewed the future of the country through the lens of social democracy. Others sought to take inspiration from the United States’ example of the development of a country. It later became evident that the latter group won. This explains the total privatization of entire parts of the public sector — gornodobychi, Neftyanoi etc. The Soviet concept of *big bourgeoisie* was replaced by that of *large businesses*. At the same time, the United States evolved from the global antipode of the Soviet Union to being admired as a model nation. These ideological and political changes took the form of a real revolution with a change of elites, morality, and ideology. Richard Sakwa has named it a “hybrid revolution”. (Sakwa, 2014) This revolution gave birth to a new elite: the Oligarchs. The Oligarchs are defined by Sakwa as: “The small group of super-rich individuals who profited from the revolutionary change in property ownership in the 1990s and who sought to dictate their own will to ministers and presidents, as well as regional leaders and other political and social actors.” (Sakwa, 2014:5)

Putin's arrival to power was prepared by the gradual replacement of Yeltsin so that the transition of power from one to another was perceived as natural and smooth. However, the new president quickly found that he lacked real power. For President Putin, the presence of oligarchs disturbed the management of the country. Therefore, he began to build a system of power which was called ‘vertical authority’. Its essence came down to discharge of oligarchs from political influence. During the Yeltsin period, the center of national wealth was in the hands of large businesses that controlled the country’s main political decisions. The establishment of vertical power by Putin aimed to limit the political

ambitions of large business and bring him out of limits of political decisions. Nevertheless, the nature of the existing state system led to a situation in which the bureaucracy of the government began to merge with big business. As a result, powerful bureaucrats began to become a part of the business elite, or 'oligarchy'. It could be said that the essence of the state's system did not change as there was a gradual replacement of the old business elite by a new one. It seems that the president has been unable to manage the capital of large business for the sake of the development of the country or to interfere with capital outflow abroad.

The arrival in power of Putin did not translate into a complete replacement of the political elite. From the collapse of the USSR onwards, Russia's leadership discourse reflects aspirations to become a member of the democratic European liberal core. That is, "Russia should be joining the world market economy, adopting neoliberal economic market principles at home, developing an economy that can export competitive industrial and high-technology products, attracting foreign investment and expertise, and adopting modern European standards of domestic economic regulation." (Hopf, 2013:332) According to a Moscow scholar Vladimir Portyakov, Russian Academy of Science (RAS) Institute of Far Easttern Studies (IFES), "the Russian government is completely pro-Western, and Medvedev and all of the vice-prime ministers are classical liberals." (Interview 2) This is exemplified instance by the return to the political elite in 2016 of Alexey Kudrin, the former Russian finance minister (2000-2011). He is a liberal reformer who worked as well in the administration of Yeltsin. Therefore, Putin's decision to bring him back can be seen as a message to the West that Russia wants to follow the path of a liberal economy and foreign markets even under the ongoing confrontation with the West. (Tkachenko, 2016)

Nevertheless, the broader Russian society, or what Ted Hopf calls the Russian c*ommon sense mass*, does not reflect these liberal aspirations of the majority of the elites, as it infused by what is called a neo-Soviet identity. *Common sense mass* is defined by the author as "taken for granted ideas of the public about social life". (Hopf, 2013; 318) It could be argued that the Russian population is more positive about many features of the Soviet period than the elites. Therefore, the Russian leadership has not discarded Soviet past as the Yeltsin administration did it. For instance, the Great Patriotic War has become under Putin's presidency, one of the main components on which Russia's national identity

is increasingly being grounded. (Ziegler, 2012:411) As Sergunin notes: "In contrast with the Soviet period when foreign policy making was purely elitist business, the current Russian political leadership has to take into account various interests of different segments of an emerging Russian civil society." (Sergunin, 2016:83)

Most of Russian and Western scholars argue that one the main roots of Russian problems lie in its inability to overcome the legacy of the Soviet twentieth century. (Smith, 2016) Conflicts and contradictions in how Russians view their past make resolving the question of identity central. Russia seemingly has to come to terms with the past "redemption of the society". (Billington, 2004) Soviet Russia is a recent past that should not be overlooked and cannot be forgotten; it is one of the components of Russia's cultural and political tradition: "The question of the country's national identity preoccupies Russian citizens and this debate involves different attitudes to, and conceptions of, the USSR." (Lewin, 2005:1)

For instance, in an opinion poll conducted by the Levada Centre in 2014, Russians were asked "Do you regret the dissolution of the USSR?" 54 percent of those polled said they regretted the demise of the Soviet Union, whereas 28 percent answered that they did not. When asked "Why do you regret it?" 30 percent of the respondents said that people had lost the sense of belonging to a great nation, and another 30 percent believed that it was because a unified economic system had disintegrated. In the same poll when asked "Do you approve or disapprove the agreement made by Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus about the termination of the USSR?" 61 percent of those Russians asked said they disapproved and only 21 percent viewed it in a positive manner. (Data from the Levada Centre, 2014) Nevertheless, around 80 percent of the Russians polled said they feel the current system is much better than the Soviet regime in regard to freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom of organisation and political participation. Furthermore, only 27 percent said that the political system they had until the 1990s was the most favourable for Russia, and to the question about of what type of state they would like Russia to be, only 21 percent of the respondents suggested a socialist state like the USSR. (Data from Russia Votes, 2015) These polls suggest there is almost no desire in Russians to return to Soviet social or political models. The immediate question is then: Why is there nostalgia for some key features of Soviet times?

It seems that Soviet social welfare and Soviet identity is a key issue. In a poll conducted in 2008, the question "What course do you think Russia should follow in present circumstances?" was answered as follows: 44 percent of those polled said that social protection and the state role in the economy should be strengthened, 14 percent thought the state role should be reduced, and only 11 percent expressed a desire to return to the Soviet regime. The same poll reports that only 15 percent felt the best economic system for Russia was a market economy, 24 percent opted for a planned economy, and 47 percent of those Russians polled said a mixed economy. Russians still call for a paternalistic state. They feel they have more freedom but at the same time they feel unprotected and see their future as uncertain. Many of the Soviet policies were of an egalitarian nature, which continues to resonate with the Russian public. (Levada Centre, 2014)

According to a Russian specialist "[…] despite all 'the dark places' of the Soviet past, people do not want to disown it, at least in part because everyone understands that the Soviet past is what unites us." (Goble, 2011:17) In 2011, 36,000 Russians were asked about 'de-Sovietization' by the Essence of Time Public Movement, and around 90 percent of those polled said they would vote against any referendum 'which would recognise the Soviet Union as a criminal state that conducted genocide against its own people and was guilty of unleashing World War II'. This poll suggests that Russians believe the Soviet past is what unites peoples from the Russian Federation, and that everything directed against the 'unifier' will not be supported by the majority of Russians. (Goble, 2011)

Post-Soviet Russian debates cannot be considered as a continuation of the pre-revolutionary debates. The Soviet past is an inherent part of Russia's history and cannot be overlooked or put aside. As Moshe Lewin observes in the introduction of his book *The Soviet Century*:

> The Soviet Union was not a temporary blip, an unwelcome interruption between a pre-Revolutionary past and post-Soviet future but a juggernaut that rolled over everything in its path. Nothing was left unaffected, from political culture to economic infrastructure, language, religion, and social habits. This book is a direct challenge to those who believe that the impact of the Soviet period can be minimized or exorcised and that either an utterly new path can be paved from its wreckage or a pre-Soviet path picked up again, like a lovingly restored chapel dwarfed by massive apartment blocks, after 70 years. (Lewin, 2005:3)

Putin's administration did not discard Russia's USSR legacy. Putin understood that the Soviet past is one of the main elements that unite Russia and that unite different peoples

across the Russian Federation. Russia under Putin has therefore pursued a balanced position toward Russia's communist past. The majority of Russians regret the collapse of the Soviet Union; nevertheless, the majority of Russians express almost no desire to return to Soviet economic or political models. President Putin appeared to speak for many in Russia when he said: "Whoever does not miss the Soviet Union has no heart, whoever wants it back has no brain". (Parfitt, 2007)

2.2.4. Russia's Schools of Thought

Within the Russia, political elites, in order to legitimise the country's foreign policy, have attempted to formulate a national identity from which the population can derive comfort since the demise of the USSR. There are clear divisions within the political elites in Russia, however. They are usually divided into three groups based on ideology. These three groups have competed for the leading place in foreign policy. Other authors have identified different groups. (Clunan, 2009) There are different ways of breaking down the Russian political elites into different groups, but this research takes only three which arguably represent the main Russian schools of thought on international affairs.

This chapter now proceeds to outline the three main schools of thought on foreign policy within Russia and how each of them sees Russia within the international order. For analytical convenience, we named the schools of thought as follows: *Westernism*, *Neo-Eurasianism*, and *Pragmatic Eurasianism*.

2.2.4.1. Westernism

In the early stage of post-Soviet discussions on foreign policy two different trends competed in the national discourse, proposing different solutions to the post-Soviet crisis: Westernism and Neo-Eurasianism.

Post-Soviet Westernisers represent continuity in the history of Russian Westernist thought, it is "[…] a clear product of a long tradition of linear Westernist thinking." (Tsygankov, 2008:771) Westernisers basically see the West as the most viable and progressive civilisation. They conceive the world as one by "[…] putting the developed

democratic West at the centre and everybody else at the periphery of global development." (Lukin, 2003:11) The world's institutional development is West-centred; concepts such as western democracy are seen as universal phenomena that should therefore be implemented in Russia.

Westernisers believe that Russian identity is essentially European. They view Russia as a Western country that was "hijacked" 70 years ago by the Bolsheviks. They feel the country should therefore associate primarily with the West and pursue pro-Western economic policies.

Westernisers dispute the idea of Russia remaining a centre of influence in the post-Soviet space and the ability of the country to become a great power again. "Russia should abandon its historical great-power traditions and any illusions about having a special role as a bridge between Europe and Asia in favor of developing its European orientation." (Light, 2003:44) Alternatively, Russia should seek partnership with Western institutions on Western terms. "They insist that only by building Western liberal institutions and integrating with the coalition of what was frequently referred to as the community of 'Western civilized nations' would Russia be able to respond to its threats and overcome its economic and political backwardness." (Tsygankov, 2010:6376)

Immediately before and after the collapse of the USSR, Westernisers became the dominant force in the Russian foreign policy debate. These "new Westernisers" were a group comprised of influential academics and high-ranking government officials led by the foreign Minister A. Kozyrev, who favoured the pro-Western orientation of Yeltsin's government. Russia, they said, should renounce its claim to global power and simply join Western economic, political, and military institutions. They assumed "[…] a radical reorientation of Russia's foreign policy toward Europe and the United States, and it included radical economic reforms, the so-called shock therapy." (Tsygankov, 2010:6380)

These pro-Western policies could not successfully address the post-Soviet identity crisis. Former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov thinks that in the early 1990s Russia had a 'romantic' vision of the world: "Then we thought that in changing the system there was a reserved place for Russia and that partners would easily understand our current difficulties and help us address the outstanding issues." (Ivanov, 2011)

The population's support for the Soviet Union was still strong; Russians identified themselves with Soviet values and symbols, some of which were now discarded, such as the national anthem. The break with the Soviet past only exacerbated the Russian identity crisis. In addition, the growing disorder, corruption, poverty and the reticence of the West in accepting Russia produced a sense of humiliation and popular discontent that made the pro-Western perspective of the Yeltsin government unsustainable. Thus, "Eurasianism" re-emerged "[…] as the first serious alternative to the pro-Western theories that were dominant in Russian international thinking during the late 1980s and early 1990s." (Sergunin, 2004:21) Eurasianism became an attractive alternative to the excessive foreign policy orientation towards the West under Kozyrev.

2.2.4.2. Neo-Eurasianism

In Soviet times, the anti-Western bias of Eurasianists often marginalised the movement, however, the idea born among Russian émigrés after the October Revolution was brought back in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's demise, when Russians began to be deeply disenchanted with the West. (Schimmelpenninck, 2010:232) The Eurasianism revival in post-Soviet Russia is mainly a reaction against Westernism and the perceived humiliation from the West following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Eurasianism became relevant in post-Soviet Russia 'because it feeds the disillusionment that many ordinary Russians feel.' (Morozova, 2007:72)

Eurasianism emphasises the 'uniqueness' of Russia and the idea that Russia should follow a 'third way' between West and East by being a bridge between both worlds, however, the term has undergone several transformations in the post-Soviet era and now this movement is far from being homogeneous. The wide variety of Eurasian perspectives makes it difficult to reduce them to a common set of denominators because of their divergences (Bassin, 2009), however, we believe it is possible to divide contemporary proponents of this theory into two main trends: Neo-Eurasianism and Pragmatic Eurasianism.

Neo-Eurasianism (Billington, 2004; Laruelle, 2008; Rangsimaporn, 2006; Tsygankov, 2010) includes the following terms: the Slavophile version (Sergunin, 2004),

Patriots (Lukin, 2003), Essentialism (Tsygankov, 2004; 2008; 2010), Radical Eurasianism (Billington, 2004), Fundamental Nationalism. (Light, 2003)

Neo-Eurasianists or the 'unreformed communists and ardent nationalists' (Light, 2003) conceptualise the world in terms of cultural opposition and struggles for dominance. With beliefs grounded in the 1920s Émigré movement, Neo-Eurasianism is a conservative ideology opposed to the West-centred worldview, maintaining "[…] that Europe is not in an advanced stage of development but represents a specific mode of development that cannot be reproduced. Russia must 'unlearn' the West and reject the imperialism of European identity." (Laruelle, 2008:71) Neo-Eurasianists conceive Russia basically as a non-Western country; it belongs neither to the West nor East but constitutes a civilisation in its own right. They conceive that the main threat to Russian identity is Western civilisation and its cultural leverage. For this reason, Russia should oppose Western influence by itself being a centre of power.

Some Eurasianists, such as Tsymbursky, are isolationists (Tsygankov, 2008). Tsymbursky sees Russia isolating itself from Europe and Asia, "[…] having been forced by the West to shrink its borders, Russia must now look to its own east in Siberia to recapture its greatness and built its future." (Billington, 2004:72) Siberians are often seen as the bearers of the values and traditions needed to revive the Russian Eurasian Empire. Thus, Siberia and the Russian Far East should be rapidly developed; there has even been a suggestion to move the capital from Moscow to Siberia. (Billington, 2004)

Tsymbursky conceptualises Russia as an island civilisation surrounded by a sea of diverse countries. "The incorporation of the vast region to the east of Urals into a single Russian civilizational plain turned Russia into a gigantic, internally homogeneous 'island' inside the continent." (Morozova, 2007:6) Russia is an island of uniqueness and difference and should therefore concentrate on developing and revitalising Siberia and the Russian Far East so that the Island of Russia can be a land of peace and stability, safeguarded by a sea against threats. Tsymbursky thinks that the borderlines of the country will be the major arena for geopolitics in the twenty-first century and Russia "by virtue of its location" will be the only country that 'can preserve the peace and prevent Euro-Atlantic dominance of Eurasia.' (Billington, 2004; Sidorov, 2006)

Many other Eurasianists such as Alexander Dugin or Gennady Zyuganov embrace Russia's oriental nature against the new world order dominated by the West. This group basically views the international system "in terms of the irreconcilable struggle of cultures, or a conflict of civilizations". (Tsygankov, 2010)

Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Russian Communist Party, argues that Russia is not a European country but a Eurasian one. He emphasises that the West is hostile to Russia; it poses a threat to Russian culture, and that therefore, Russia should overcome "the wasteful character of modern Western civilisation." (Lukin, 2003:9)

Alexander Dugin claims to represent the true continuation of Eurasianism. He views Russia as a "[…] single cohesive civilizational entity encompassing the diverse peoples who occupy the broad spaces of the Eurasian landmass." (Bassin, 2009:284) He predicts an irreconcilable struggle between land-mass Eurasianists and sea-oriented Atlanticists, and therefore pushes for a new "Eurasian Empire" beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union that will lead a global struggle against Atlanticism by forging new axes (Berlin-Tokyo-Tehran) and a Russian-Islamic pact. He basically conceptualises the West as "hostile", but the "enemy" is mainly the United States, and West European countries could even become allies; the United States as the enemy is the "unifying force." (Shlapentokh, 2007) Dugin agrees with Tsymbursky on the importance of Siberia and the Russian Far East, and even proposed the Siberian city of Novosibirsk as the new Russian capital.

Neo-Eurasianism came to being as an alternative to the radical pro-Western polices under Kozyrev, however, its vision was soon subjected to criticism. For instance, Mark Bassin observes that Dugin's Eurasianism is just a camouflaged anti-Americanism because anyone against the United States could be part of Eurasia. He argues that at first sight the level of similarity between the Émigrés' Eurasianism and Dugin's appear to be real, but at a deeper level, apparent similarities become fundamental divergences and Eurasia becomes not a national idea for post-communist Russia but "[…] a universal project representing virtually the entire world' and could be joined by any member of the human race despite their nationality." (Bassin, 2009:294)

It seems that Neo-Eurasianists consider the goals of the integration of Russia into the international community and the preservation of Russia's integrity as mutually exclusive. They see Russia as an empire and not a nation, an empire that can only exist by

being hostile to the West. Billington argues that a relatively well-educated Russian population is not inclined to respond to these 'weak theories' 'based on hostility' and absent of 'any positive program for Russia', often camouflaged by an idealised past. "(Neo) Eurasianism as an ideology is almost certainly too arcane and too full of questionable history and inner contradictions to withstand scholarly cross-examination, let alone command broad popular support." (Billington, 2004:85)

Thus, Westernisers on the one hand, and Neo-Eurasianists on the other, were unable to adequately address the dilemmas of Russian identity. Their radical, essentialist and deterministic vision severely marginalised them. Westernisers and Neo-Eurasianists represent polar views of Russian identity. They offer radical outlooks on Russia's past, present and future. Between these two extremes there are multiple perspectives seeking to connect Russian and European values while preserving Russian independence and distinctiveness, and remedying the deficiencies of the two earlier perspectives.

2.2.4.3. Pragmatic Eurasianism

Pragmatic Eurasianism (Light 2003) include the terms: Liberal Eurasianism (Neuman, 1996) Democrats (Sergunin, 2004), Derzhavniki (Sergunin, 2004; Tsygankov, 2008; 2010), Balanced policy (Lukin, 2003) Realism (Bogaturov, 2004; Tsygankov, 2008; 2010), Pragmatic Eurasianism (Rangsimaporn, 2006) Euro-Asian. (Laruelle, 2008)

This trend constitutes a response to the polarisation of the early 1990s between Westernism and Neo-Eurasianism. As disillusion and discontent within the population grew in the 1990s, this trend became more influential in foreign policy debates. By discussing global power and how Russia should adjust to it, its proponents gained the status of the leading intellectual movement. (Light, 2003; Sergunin, 2004; Bogaturov, 2004; Rangsimaporn, 2006; Laruelle, 2008) Unlike Westernisers or Neo-Eurasianists, Pragmatic Eurasianists were able to articulate the main priorities and concerns of Russians in their discourse. "Today, most Russian scholars and politicians insist that the new Russia must become part of the emerging world order on the most favourable terms possible. This shift in discourse should be viewed as a victory of realism in Russian debates on international relations." (Bogaturov, 2004:38)

Many divergences can be found within this trend, however, and it could be said that Pragmatic Eurasianists basically agree on some principles: the priority of national interests, active foreign policy, balance of power and a strong state. (Sergunin, 2004)

Pragmatic Eurasianists assert that Russian foreign policy should be guided by real national interests and not by 'messianic ideas', which they see as 'problematic'. "The Realists agree that foreign policy strategy must be based upon national interests and on the state's resolution in defending Russia's national interest in relation to the outside world." (Bogaturov, 2004:42) Thus, Russian foreign policy should reflect the way that the country is responding to its internal problems and priorities.

Within this trend, the crisis of identity in Russia is seen as the main crisis experienced by the country. They address the question of identity by bridging elements from both East and West instead of just choosing one and rejecting the other. Pragmatic Eurasianists basically agree that though Russia is geographically in Europe and Asia, it is part of European civilisation. Due to its historic and geographic peculiarities, however, it has strong ties with the non-European world.

The notion of a strong and independent Russian state that maintains order and stability (Derzhava) is at the heart of Pragmatic Eurasianism. They agree that it is in Russia's national interest to remain a great power; otherwise, it will not be able to deal with internal and external challenges. Pragmatic Eurasianism views the post-Cold War world as a multipolar one and Russia is one of the poles; they urge Russia to consolidate this position. Defending Russia as a relatively independent power centre, Pragmatic Eurasianists pursue the notion of multi-vector foreign policy: Russia should diversify its international relations, and closer ties with Asian countries will strengthen its position vis-à-vis the West. Russia is a European and Asian power that is responsible for securing and stabilising the post-Soviet space.

Pragmatic Eurasianists do not directly reject Westernism or Neo-Eurasianism. For instance, they criticise the heavy reliance of the Westernisers on the West but highlight the necessity of maintaining good relations with European countries, and favour the consolidation of democracy by rejecting any attempt to return to Soviet political practices. Indeed, the significance of Europe to Russia and their cultural affinity is rarely questioned. Based on the perception that it is not in the interests of Western nations to see a powerful

and independent Russian nation, however, Pragmatic Eurasianists believe that the idea of remaining a great power creates a conflict of interest between Russia and Western countries. Ergo, to remain a great power, it is imperative to strengthen ties with non-European countries, especially East Asian nations such as China, South Korea and Japan.

Apparently, after polarisation and ungovernability, a 'consensus' within the majority of the elite about Russian foreign policy has hitherto prevailed. (Light, 2003) We can describe this consensus as the general agreement that Russia was and should remain a great power, and that it is responsible for maintaining peace and stability in the post-Soviet space. The Levada Centre reports that in 2011 the question "Do you support the opinion that Russia should restore its status as a Great Power" was answered as follows: 40 percent of the respondents definitively agreed with the idea, 38 percent said they probably support it, while a mere 2 percent said they definitively did not support it. It could be said that the poll shows that around 80 percent of Russians are in agreement with the elite consensus. (Russia Votes, 2015)

Supporters of Westernism and Russian democracy thus tried to adapt to Pragmatic Eurasianism "[…] to capture the sympathy of ordinary people by appealing to the humiliation of their national dignity […] (it) was part of a strategy aimed at conquering both the public opinion and the political elite." (Sergunin, 2004:21) Indeed, "It was the liberal Westernists who gave way (to the consensus) modifying their ideas and adopting more nationalistic positions." (Light, 2003:45) Thus, Pragmatic Eurasianists, among whom were newly converted Westernisers, formed the Russian foreign policy mainstream.

The Russian elite became more suspicious of Western intentions toward the country, however. They began to perceive more military and economic threats. "In general terms, the official foreign concept portrayed a far less benign view about Russia's external environment than the liberal Westernists had held. It was also more assertive about Russia's role in the world, particularly in the 'near abroad'" (Light, 2003:46) It seems that the change from Westernism to Pragmatic Nationalism in Russian foreign policy is the acceptance of 'pragmatism' or 'Realpolitik' as its basis. "Pragmatic Nationalism is the standard view one might expect the foreign policy elite to hold in any country: the robust identification and defense of the national interests is normal, in the sense of political realist's view that prevails in most countries." (Light, 2003:48)

Although Neo-Eurasianism seems to be marginalised from the current Russian foreign policy debate, their opinions are still heard, since around a quarter of the Russian population shares their views. In fact, in the 2012 presidential election, 24 percent of Russian electors supported the 'Neo-Eurasianist option': 6 percent voted for the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party and 17 percent opted for the Communist Party.

Claims that Russia is a great power and plays an important role in world processes have been reiterated by the Russian government since the 1990s. It could be argued that Pragmatic Eurasianism became the official usage of Eurasianism under the Putin administration. (Rangsimaporn, 2006) This official use envisages Russia as a bridge connecting East and West via Siberia and the Russian Far East.

Unlike Neo-Eurasianism, Official Eurasianism uses the term "Eurasia" geographically rather than ideologically. According to this, Eurasianism is not to be seen as a national ideology but a recognition of Russia's geographic location: Russia is in Europe and in Asia, therefore it has interests in both subcontinents. (Rangsimaporn, 2006; Laruelle, 2008)

It could be argued that the Russian government under Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev has embraced the vision of Russia as part of the European world. President and former Prime Minister Vladimir Putin several times insisted that "Russia was, is, and will be a major European power." (Light, 2003; Winchester, 2005; Gvosdev, 2007:10) Russia is said to be moving toward democracy and freedom just as any other European country; however, it is stressed that it does this at its own pace, given its peculiarities and ties with the non-Western world.

Putin's vision includes features of great-power thinking. Putin has stated that Russia has to be a Eurasian country to be a great power, and Russia as a nation can only exist as a great power. According to Putin, "Such a country as Russia can only survive and develop within the existing borders if it stays as a great power. During all its times of weakness … Russia was invariably confronted with the threat of disintegration." (Putin quoted in Tsygankov, 2005:132) Thus, it seems that great-power status is not an end for Putin but a necessary condition for Russia's existence. "Putin believes that the preservation of Russia's economic and military prowess is a necessary condition for its very survival." (Tsygankov, 2005:133)

In general, it could be said that Russian elites are pro-Western as they were in the 1990's. The political and economic elites in the 1990s, however, did not take into account mass common sense and therefore the elites' ideological project found resistance within the Russian population and ultimately failed. "Russian political and economic elites, whether intentionally or not, have ended up implementing, or practicing, Russian common sense, as much if not more than neoliberal discourse." (Hopf, 2013:344)

Identity issues became highly contested in Russia in the 1990's among different groups and the conflict was very intense' until one of the visions of the country became predominant. Under Putin, *pragmatist eurasianism* became dominant when its self-images could hold historical validity and could be successfully applied under current conditions. Consequently, this dominant national identity determines Russia's national interests and the foreign policy it should pursue under Putin's administration. In this sense, the majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. "Putin reflected and entrenched the elite's consensus that Russia's identity was that of global great power and that the states strength and modernity are the core methods to attain the country's interests." (Clunan, 2014:291) Moreover, being a great power has been institutionalised as "it is the ultimate domestic requirement for any Russian leader." (Leichtova, 2014:14)

2.3. Russia's Great Power Identity

It is often assumed there is a handful of countries called *great powers* whose influence in world affairs is much greater than that of the rest of the countries combined. Listing the countries that are meant to be great powers could be problematic, however, as the list seems to be intuitive in most cases. Kenneth Waltz agrees with such intuitive lists: "Historically, despite the difficulties, one finds general agreement about who the great powers of a period are, with occasional doubt about the marginal cases." (Waltz, 1979:131) What is it to be a great power? Paul Kennedy defines great power as a state capable of holding its own against any other nation. (Kennedy, 1987:539).

What are the criteria used to determine whether a country is a great power or not? There is no straightforward answer to this question. Greatpowerness has been historically measured more according to realist criteria.

Traditionally in International Relations, great power status is related to material capabilities: military strength, territory, resources, population, economic capabilities, and strategic location. Nowadays, in addition to these hard power elements, soft power elements such as culture, country's attractiveness, technology, and forms of government play an important role in claiming great power status. It is not an easy task to define what a great power is as there is not complete agreement on the definition of a great power or the parameters of greatpowerness. (Smith, 2016:130)

In general, it is agreed that the aforementioned hard power elements have to be present so that a country could be considered a great power, in particular military strength, territory, and resources. To these elements other hard power and especially soft power elements are added. Parameters of greatpowerness start to differ when it comes to forms of soft power.

2.3.1. Russia's Claim to Great Power Status

Until the seventeenth century, Russia had a marginal role in European politics and it would be difficult to consider it as a great power of the time by any criteria. As Iver Neumann notes, (2014:4) it is generally agreed that the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia embodies the accession of Russia as a great power along with other European powers such as France, Austria, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. Similarly, the war signified the fall of Sweden as a great power. It can be said that from the reign of Peter I onwards, Russia had to be a great power but it became a different kind of great power at different points in history: Russian Empire and Soviet Union were different attempts to fulfil the criteria.

Great power identity is an essential part of Russian national identity, acting as a state ideology and as a uniting factor among the leadership and most of the population. Similarly, great power identity plays a major role in Russia's foreign policy formation. The

Russian leadership and the majority of the elites and population see the country as a great power.

After the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian Federation was recognised as the successor state of the Soviet Union, and consequently Russia was treated as the loser of the Cold War. Moreover, the economic crises that befell Russia, the reduction of its territory, and the ideological vacuum left in Eurasia after Communism, led Western countries, the self-assumed winners of the Cold War, to underestimate Russia and to treat it as a second rate state.

It is important to point out that the outcome of the Cold War is still a highly debated topic in Russia. For instance, Arbatov (2006) highlights that "It is extremely important to realize that the Soviet Union, contrary to the widespread view abroad and in Russia, was not defeated in the Cold War and did not collapse under the burden of arms race but "[…] the breakup of the Soviet Union coincided in time with the end of the Cold War. In history, however, 'after' is not always equivalent to 'because of'." Similarly, Hobsbawm (1995) argues that the Cold War ended in 1986 following the Reykjavik summit between Gorbachev and Reagan. The Soviet Union was a fortress in a state of siege that collapsed when the siege was lifted and closer contacts with the world occurred. Détente and not confrontation resulted in the collapse of the USSR.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union constituted the end of the bipolar order that had emerged after the Second World War, and in this regard, the 'winners' tried to strengthen their position at the expense of the 'loser'. As Palat (2010:84) points out, western countries expected Russia to "shrink, like the rest of Europe and to become European". For Russia, "being European meant to retreat, to become a junior partner, and to leave the leadership of the world to the United States and its western allies". Ergo, Putin called the demise of the USSR 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century' and 'a genuine tragedy' for Russians.

As it was explained in Chapter Two, under Yeltsin's presidency, Russia sought to be closer to Europe and the United Sates, but its influence on international affairs was very limited. The state's weakness impeded Russia in claiming equal partnership with western countries and therefore its interests were not often taken into account. It became clear that cooperation with Europe and the US would occur only with Russia as a junior partner,

which for Russia would mean the subjugation of its economic, political, and security interests. In the Russian mind, "These conditions could not be accepted by a country with a thousand-year history, vast territory (including Siberia) and world's biggest natural resources." (Yurlov, 2010:129)

In the 1990s, although it was generally accepted within the Russian elite that the country was incapable of being a superpower as the Soviet Union had been, it was assumed that Russia would almost certainly become a global power in the post-Cold War world. In an attempt to regain its great power status by counterbalancing the US unipolar order established in the 1990s, the Russian elite thus developed the concept of *multipolarity*: an international system in which a handful of large states (great powers, poles) were the guardians of the global order based on a balance of power among them. Each center of power must have considerable military, economic, and political potential, as well as the will and the ability to regulate and influence world processes. Naturally, Russia regarded itself as one pole within this multipolar world.

Y. Primakov was the main advocate of multipolarity during the Yeltsin era (Rangsimaporn, 2009), and several times stressed "Russia's greatness" and Russia's status as a great power, but at that time, the arguments seemed unconvincing: Russia was a weak state undergoing a severe crisis. It became clear to the Russian leadership that for this end it was imperative to strengthen the state and the economy - only in this way could Russia be a real centre of power again.

The aim of achieving the status of a great power was more clearly defined under Putin's government, and he began to pursue this end more pragmatically. Putin's purpose was not to restore the Soviet as a superpower, but to make Russia a 'normal great power'. He has several times highlighted that Russia 'is and will remain a great power'. (Rangsimaporn, 2009) For Putin, Russia had developed the capabilities of a great power in order to secure its borders. In fact, being a great power is a prerequisite for the existence of Russia as a nation; Russia cannot but be a great power.

In this way, and under Putin's administration, Russia became gradually more self-assertive and began to strengthen its military, political and economic might. (Yurlov, 2010:130) Similarly, the concept of multipolarity was further developed under Putin's presidency. The government declared that multipolarity was the basis of the Russian

approach to international politics. In a visit to Argentina Putin declared: "We favour the principles of a multi-polar world, which are equality, indivisibility and security." (The China Post, 2014)

But what does it mean to Russia, to be a global power in a multipolar world? Firstly, Russia sees itself as an indispensable nation. It does not claim to be an exceptional nation, as the United States does, and indeed Putin has several times criticised US exceptionalism. Russia's indispensability means that as a great power, "Russia once and for all wants to reserve a seat at the table where the future of the world is decided." (Lukyanov, 2013) Russia believes it has the right to be at the table where important decisions are taken. Secondly, it is essential for Russia to have a manoeuvrable foreign policy and the possibility of retaining the status of an independent strategic centre of power, thus avoiding entering the zone of attraction of some other strong centre, particularly that of China or the US. For Russia, freedom of choice is an asset in the era of multipolarity, not just the freedom to choose strategic partners, but also the freedom to choose the ways and methods of modernisation in order to create favourable conditions for internal development. (Yefremenko, 2010) According to Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, "The independence of Russia's foreign policy is our achievement, gained over the preceding centuries of historical development and through the experience of the last 20 years. Russia cannot simply exist as a subordinate country of a world leader." (Lavrov, 2012)

Apparently, Russia has recovered some of its global power capabilities since the dissolution of the USSR, when it lost about 20 percent of its territory, 50 percent of its population, its economy shrank by 50 percent, and when the state lost almost all ability to govern.

According to the official Russian view, the nation has regained its strength and mostly recovered from the problems of the 1990s. Accordingly, Russia began to pursue a strategy of great power normalisation: cooperation, but not at the expense of Russia's traditional interests. By the same token, Russia began to act more assertively. For instance, the Russia-Georgia war was seen as the end of the monopoly of the West's use of force. (Tsygankov, 2010)

The Russian leadership believes that Russia still has an important role to play, not just militarily but politically, scientifically, and culturally. Due to its unique location in

Eurasia, Russia could be a bridge, a political pivot. "We view ourselves as – and we really are – one of the centres of the new polycentric world. This status of Russia is due to its military, geographical and economic capabilities, its culture and human potential." (Lavrov, 2012)

In this transition to a 'post-Western World' or to an "Asian Century", is it thus possible to say that Russia remains a global power? Martin Smith responds affirmatively:

> During Boris Yeltsin's presidency in the 1990s, Russia was frequently discounted as an important and influential actor on the international stage. This has, however, been decreasingly the case during the era of Vladimir Putin's political dominance since the early 2000s. There have been growing perceptions that Russia is reviving as a great power and, for better or worse, is becoming an increasingly important player in efforts to grapple with significant challenges, such as the onset of civil war in Syria during 2012. (Smith, 2013:37)

For the majority of Russian scholars Russia has to be counted in the list of great powers. Andrey Tsygankov (2009:13) believes that "[…] Russia will be in a group of the tipping-point states that will be determining the balance of power among larger states: US, China, EU." Sergei Karaganov (2010) asserts that Russia is the world's third largest international actor and is certain to remain so in the foreseeable future. Lukyanov (2013) confirms that Russia is a global power and that it has all the elements to be one-military, strategic, geographical and geopolitical - and therefore is still among the top three, on a par with the United States and China.

Western scholars and leaders often also regard Russia as a global power. Generally, it is argued that only the USA, Russia, China, India, and the EU collectively, can be referred as global powers or future global powers. (Smith, 2013; Kissinger, 1994; Walton, 2007:7) Scanlan (2010:365) suggests that by having the largest stockpile of ballistic missiles, being a pioneer in space exploration and the partner of the US in the construction and operation of the International Space Station, even a diminished Russia remains a global force.

As a matter of fact, the majority of western and Russian analysts alike regard Russia as a global power and a relevant force in the international system, divergences mostly consist of whether Russia is are-rising or a decaying power. Indeed, many in the west regard Russia a decaying global power, on its path to becoming simply a regional power.

Some Russian analysts emphasise the fact that in western countries Russia is often viewed as a decaying power undergoing a process of re-Sovietization under Putin's political dominance. They believe that the reason for this anti-Russian rhetoric lies in the fact that western countries want to 'keep Russia down', and that they simply cannot reconcile the idea of a strong post-Soviet Russian state, even when Russia has retained some of its attributes of global power, and the performance of its economy has drastically improved in the last ten years. (Yurlov, 2010; Karaganov, 2010; Lyukanov, 2011)

It seems that there is awareness within the Russian elite that the country cannot regain the same status of superpower as held by the Soviet Union. The USSR's potential is not comparable to that of the post-Soviet Russian state. In fact, Russia only enjoyed the status of superpower for about 45 years. Before the Great Patriotic War, "In all important parameters that make the notion of power, Russia was among the first but not the first, ahead of its rivals in some aspects but behind them in others." (Spasskiy, 2011) According to Leshchenko (2010) and Spasskiy (2011) Russia could not become a superpower mainly because of its insufficient population. Hypothetically, this could change, "But it will need to forge ahead three things: mass immigration, a strong pronatalist policy and forced modernization. Soft authoritarianism will not be enough, to fulfil it require real, full-scale totalitarianism." (Spasskiy, 2011) Instead, Russia can be strong enough on its own to be an independent centre of power. Spasskiy (2011) urges the acceptance of an alternative to superpower aspirations: a huge territory, with rich resources, and a relatively small population living well, with strong armed forces to defend its territory, resources and population.

2.3.2. Russia's Great Power Attributes

So what are the great power attributes that Russia is said to preserve? These are the largest inventory of nuclear weapons, strong military, leadership in space exploration, permanent membership of the UN Security Council, vast territory, abundant natural resources and huge economic potential.

Notwithstanding the severe crisis that Russia's armed forces underwent, Russia's military is still often considered the second strongest military force (even when nuclear

capability is not taken into account), only behind the US, and ahead of China. (Global Firepower, 2015)

For the Russian elite, there are objective reasons to think that the world is becoming more dangerous and chaotic. Accordingly, military force is necessary to contain and neutralise emerging threats. "In my view, there is no doubt that in the turbulent world around us, (strong armed forces) this is not just an issue of status but a must, because it is only this way that the country's security can be reliably guaranteed." (Lavrov, 2012) Accordingly, Russia is currently undertaking an intensive military reform, which is said to be the most radical change since the creation of the Red Army in 1918. (Karaganov, 2012) The reform, launched in 2008, is aimed at military enhancement, re-equipping and reorganising the Russian armed forces. The ongoing reform is designed to transform the Soviet model of mass mobilisation and numeric superiority into a compact and permanently combat-ready force. (Valdai, 2012) More than 23 trillion roubles are planned to be allocated to this undertaking over the next ten years. The State Armament Programme for 2011-2020 aims to almost fully re-equip the armed forces with the latest hardware; it is planned that by 2020 more than 70 percent of the weaponry will be modern. Other key elements of the reform are the centralisation of the training system, reducing the armed forces to a strength of one million, reorganising the army in a brigade system, reorganising the air force into an air base system instead of regiments, and new military districts, among other things. (Valdai, 2012)

The ongoing modernisation responds to the "[…] need for modern armed forces capable of containing or preventing immediate threats to security […] (and) Russia's positioning itself in the international arena as a major power." (Karaganov, 2012)

In recent years Russia has thus drastically increased its defence budget. Military spending increased in 2012 by 9.1 percent. In 2012 Russia's military budget was $81,000,000,000, 4 percent of its GDP. In 2014 defence spending increased to $84,462,000,000 and accounted for 4.5 percent of its GDP. In 2014, Russia was the third largest spender on defence, only behind the US and China, and ahead of Saudi Arabia, France, and the United Kingdom. (Data from SIPRI, 2015)

According to the Ministry of Defence, the main objective is that the new organisation allows the Russian Armed Forces immediate response and the ability to

become rapidly involved in limited scale conflicts within Russia or the neighbouring states. A nuclear deterrent is essential for the containment of other great powers such as China, NATO or the US. In 2014 Putin exhorted western countries 'not to mess with Russia'. Putin said: "Thank God, I think no one is thinking of unleashing a large-scale conflict with Russia. I want to remind you that Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers." (Parfitt, 2014) Consequently, the Russian leadership sees as indispensable the preservation and modernisation of the country's nuclear forces, especially the strategic nuclear forces.

Despite the significant reductions in Russian nuclear forces since 1992, Russia still possesses the largest nuclear stockpile in the world. Although the exact number of Russia's nuclear weapon is unknown, according to the Federation of American Scientists, the total nuclear inventory of Russia is about 8,500 nuclear weapons, almost a thousand more that in the USA's arsenal and far ahead of China, France and the UK. (Kristensen, 2013)

A world without nuclear weapons is not feasible for the time being, for the Russian leadership. What is more, they conceive of nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantors of the security of the country. According to Karaganov (2010b) it would be a suicide to renounce the support of a powerful nuclear – including tactical – potential, which is the main guarantor of Russia's security and the crucial source of its political and even economic position in world competition, "[…] nuclear deterrence as a modern equivalent of the Sword of Damocles that will not let plunge into hell." Thus, Russia will continue to rely to a great extent on nuclear arms in order to preserve its political status.

Another great power attribute is space leadership. The USSR can be considered a pioneer in space exploration. Today, after the crisis of the 1990s, it seems that the Russian space programme is regaining strength. Even when the programme was almost unfunded after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it could be argued that Russia, along with the United States, are still the leaders in space exploration. There is a deep interdependence between both space programmes. (Ryan, 2012) For example, the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos) and NASA are the main partners in the International Space Station (ISS). Even with the current tensions between Russia and the United States, space cooperation has not been affected.

For the Russian elite, the space exploration programme constitutes a key element of its ambitions as a great power. The importance of space exploration for Russia was

acknowledged in the 2000s. Similarly, in 2005 Putin stated: "[…] without astronautics, Russia cannot compete for one of the leading positions in the world's civilization, and will not be able to provide its defense at a necessary level." (Zack, 2008)

The Russian government has increased spending on the space industry by at least 40 percent a year in the last 5 years. In 2006, the federal budget for the Russian Space Agency was about one billon dollars; the budget in 2013 for Roscosmos was 5.6 billion dollars. This makes Russia the second largest spender on space exploration, only after NASA (17.8 billion) but ahead of the European Space Agency (ESA).

In the same way, Putin has drafted Russia's short (2005-2020) and long term space strategies (2020-2040). Both strategies not only aim to retain leadership in manned space flight (they historically comprised about 60 percent of the space budget) but to develop other exploration programmes. The long term strategy includes manned missions to the Moon and Mars by 2030. One of the most important projects is the construction of the new Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Amur Oblast, in the Russian Far East. The undertaking, which is expected to be ready by 2018, will lessen Russia's dependence on the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and is considered 'one of the most ambitious initiatives in Russia today'. The Cosmodrome, which will cost Russia around $20 billion and will host a scientific research centre, will feature two launch pads by 2015 and will be capable of performing manned space launches by 2018. (RT, 2013a) According to the Russian government, "In the 21st century, Russia should preserve its status as leading space power, and therefore, the development of our space capability is set to be a top priority in state policy. We will pay increased attention to this." (RT, 2013a)

One of the key elements used to sustain Russia's aspirations to be a great power is its strategic, vast and resource-rich territory in Asia. "What has enabled Russia to rise among the great powers of the world and supplied her with the means to maintain that position once she achieved it has been the conquest of Siberia." (Lincoln, 1993:1)

Despite the loss of the Central Asian and East European Republics following the collapse of the USSR, Russia's Asia territory exceeds the land mass of any other country in the world. Asiatic Russia is an enormous land; comprising 13.1 million square kilometres it is 77 percent of the territory of Russia, 30 percent of the Asiatic landmass and about one-tenth of the earth's land surface. If it was an independent country, it would be the world's

largest. Siberia is as rich in resources as it is large in size; it is one of the richest regions of the world in terms of natural resources. Indeed, over 90 percent of the natural resources in the Russian Federation are located in Siberia. The region has one of the harshest climates on earth, however. The lowest temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere occur in Siberia. The region is located in Asia-Pacific, which is home to the majority of great powers and it is where most of their interests converge.

Asiatic Russia "[…] amounts essentially to the territory acquired by the expansion of Muscovy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." (March, 1996:238) As will be described in Chapter Three, the territory was brought under Russian control mainly in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although the region remained a land of fur and exiles until the nineteenth century. Most of the resources were not fully exploited until the twentieth century. The vast and resource rich territory of Siberia was crucial in the rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower. What is more, Siberia is paramount in the Russian Federation's aspirations to great power. This will be further examined throughout this thesis.

For the Russian leadership and leading scholars, the main elements of what makes a country a great power are, especially, hard power elements. (Leshchenko, 2010; Shakleina, 2013) The Russian leadership follows a more realist approach in which great powers are countries that have material power and the ability to project it. (Ziegler, 2012:403) In this sense, Russia would have most of the attributes which traditionally have characterised great powers: military strength, territory, leadership in space, and natural resources. But in terms of economy and population, Russia has little likelihood of fulfilling the criteria. Russia, however, has recently paid more attention to soft power forms such as culture, education, technology, science, and acting globally.

2.3.3. Russia's Soft Power

Historically, Russia has had problems being recognised as a great power by the European powers. Neumann argues that this lack of recognition is to a great extent due to a difference in governance. "Russia's lack of social power to have its regime type accepted as being on a par with European ones is the key problem hampering Russia's quest for recognition."

(Neumann, 2008:45) He puts it in terms of state-society relations: Russia lacks the social agents necessary to mediate between state and population: direct rule instead of indirect rule. By the same token, Russia is unwilling and unable to change from a rationality of direct rule to an indirect form of governance. (Neumann, 2014:7)

Charles Ziegler agrees with Neumann: "Russia's historical problem in securing recognition as a great power is linked to its governance problem." (Ziegler, 2012:402) According to Neumann, the Russian leadership "pledges" to implement Western economic and political practices, but the model of governance that Russia is de facto implementing runs against liberal conceptions, where the question is how the state may govern less. "[The Russian government] sees society as something to be managed, not as something that must by necessity be given a certain leeway. This means that Russia is once again evolving a rationality of government that has firm precedents in Western Europe but that has, at the time of Russia's adopting it, been left behind by West European states themselves." (Neumann, 2008) Russia's problem with being recognised as a great power is a civilisational one.

> As seen from Europe, a Great Power cannot have state/society relations that are too different from those that at any one given time dominate European politics. [...] the societal differences that have historically existed between Western European powers and Russia and those that are inextricably linked to the system of governance are still with us. Examples include ownership, freedom of contract, judiciary and penal practices, health administration and a whole range of other practices. (Neumann, 2008)

Neumann argues that due to its weak social and economic power base, the Russian state is weak and has to shout to get things done at home and abroad. In this sense, the author asks: Why is Russia shouting about being a great power? He then says that when someone shouts about their status, this means that that status is insecure, as those who are secure in their status do not have to shout about it. (Neumann, 2014:5) Neumann accurately makes evident Russia's weaknesses and insecurities. We can draw a parallel, however, between Russia's constant shouting about being a great power to the Western insistence on Russia not being a great power. Some leaders and political elites in the West often depict Russia as a 'declining' or 'regional' power. (Borger, 2014; Korolev, 2015) Why does the West insist on calling Russia a 'declining' or 'regional power'? If Russia is not a global power anymore, why the persistence in saying Russia is not a great power? It is beyond the

scope of this thesis to discuss whether Russia can be considered a great power or not, however. By the same token, the aim of this work is not to analyse the reasons why Russia is not fully recognised by the West as a great power but to examine Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power and its consequences in foreign policy.

The type of governance in Putin's Russia is often described in the West as 'despotic' and 'authoritarian'. Similarly, in Western media Russia is often associated with negative phenomena. The Russian leadership is aware it is losing 'the information war' against the West. Consequently, in recent years the Russian leadership has paid more attention to the idea of 'soft power' and has tried to improve Russia's image in the world, particularly in Europe. For instance, information broadcasting channel RT (formerly known as Russia Today) was conceived as a 'soft power tool' to improve Russia's image abroad. Similarly, hosting the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi can be framed as a Russian soft power attempt to portray itself as a modern country open to the world. All this can be seen as part of a wider soft power strategy of the Russian leadership to obtain great power recognition in the West.

Under Putin's administration, Russia includes traditional forms of hard power to claim great power status: military strength, resources, territory. But it also includes soft power elements such as culture, science, education, and diplomacy. As noted by Hanna Smith: "The longer Putin's third presidential term has proceeded the clearer it has become that Russia is trying to present itself as a great power with traditional means but also by using more 'soft power' elements." (Smith, 2016:142)

Russia's understanding of soft power greatly differs from that of the West, however. (Kiseleva, 2015; Lukyanov, 2013; Sergunin, 2015) Russia strives to better its image in Europe through soft power elements. When it cannot, it appeals to its great power status and opposes its 'own soft power' to that in the West. "Russia effectively reverses the logic of soft power, it lays claim to soft power automatically, as a consequence of its ostensibly obvious great powerhood." (Kiseleva, 2015:322) Russia's soft power is often framed in geopolitical terms. In this sense, J. Nye (2013) argues that Russia does not get what soft power is and therefore its efforts to increase its soft power will unlikely bring any meaningful results.

Nye is particularly critical on Russia and China in terms of how they interpret the concept of soft-power. According to Nye, the three main aspects of soft power are: attractiveness of diplomacy, attractiveness of political system, and attractiveness of culture. He does not include other elements such as economic factors. China and Russia have tried, however, to broaden this concept. In the words of Alexander Sergunin:

> Nye reduces soft power only to these three dimension. For China and Russia, soft power is everything that is not hard power, that is, military power. Everything else is soft power. What it is not military is soft. Russia's and China's conceptions came from their interpretation of the concept of security, hard and soft security, so they draw an analogy and they are very pragmatic in this sense. The Russian foreign policy conception adopted by Putin in 2015 establishes that soft power strategies are the combination of different political instruments to promote Russia's image and increase Russia's influence. It is not a power of attraction but an instrument. (Interview 17)

On the contrary, for Nye, most of the sources of soft power come from society, from the civil society, whereas in Russia they come from the state. According to the Saint Petersburg scholar, "Russian civil society is still in an 'embryo stage'." (Interview 17) As he notes. "Russian NGO's are still funded by the state and those who receive money from abroad are severely punished, as this is prohibited by law." (Interview 17)

It seems that Russia's soft power strategy has been not effective. In the words of Alexander Sergunin: "On the one hand, Russia possesses huge soft power resources of an economic, societal, political, and cultural nature. On the other hand, Moscow is often unable to use these resources in a coherent way." (Sergunin, 2015:360)

There is a need for Russia to use soft power more effectively in order to maintain and reclaim its great power status. "As a (would-be) great power, Russia cannot afford to ignore soft power and considers it imperative to use it in its foreign policy, especially in Western countries, where it has encountered a serious image problem." (Kiseleva, 2015:320)

Russia wants to get recognition on its own terms. Russia's soft power is not only 'too soft' but it does not coincide with Western parameters. "It appears that recognition of Russian soft power by Western countries, and consequently an improvement in Russia's damaged image, are contingent upon Russia meeting the hegemonic criteria for soft power-namely liberal democratic values and practices." (Kiseleva, 2015:326)

It could be said that in Soviet times Russia's soft power was stronger and used in a more effective manner. For Fyodor Lukyanov (2013b) the Soviet model was attractive to some countries as it offered them an alternative model which challenged Western capitalist ideology by promoting socialist ideas of progress, equality, and justice. The Soviet model, however, is exhausted and has not been replaced. The Russian Federation is arguably much more pragmatic and less attractive as it lacks an ideological basis to appeal to other countries. Russia is seen as a counterbalance to US hegemony; nevertheless, it does not have much more to offer to other countries in terms of ideas. In Lukyanov's words, Russian soft power is 'too soft'. Nevertheless, Russia's soft power softness stems not only from a different understanding of what soft power is but to a great extent to the ideological vacuum created after the dissolution of the USSR:

> Nearly all discussions about Russia's soft power lead to the conclusion that if a country wants to gain influence in the world, it must have an attractive model to offer other countries. This is the only way to project a positive image and have a positive impact. Russia is moving toward a new identity, which is a difficult and painful process without a clear path or end point. The current conservative trends in Russia do not represent the final destination, but only the first step in a long journey. And until the Russian nation defines its goals and guidelines for itself, it will be unable to offer anything attractive to other countries. Therefore, soft power will be at best limited to a set of technical measures – not entirely useless, but ultimately ineffective. (Lukyanov, 2013b)

2.3.4. Greatpowerness

In the 1990s, Westernisers and the Yeltsin administration were viewed as betrayers of a sort for denying the country's past and historical interests, that is, denying Russia's historical status as a great power. "Despite their initial dominance, these radical Westernizers failed to lock in their liberal internationalist national self-image as the foundation for Russia's new identity and its national interests. They soon succumbed to the historical aspirations for great power status that all other political elites hold." (Clunan, 2014:3)

Russia conceives of itself as a great power between the West and Asia. It is one of the few great powers to have a noun "*velikoderzhavnost*" – greatpowerness - to define its status and position in the world. This 'greatpowerness' is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making.

Being at the confluence of two worlds – East and West – has had long-term influence on how Russia has thought of its national identity, in particular prompting the question: to what extent is it joining or resisting these two worlds? Russia considers itself a European country and part of the wider Western civilization. Joining the West, however, would mean to the Russian leadership denying the country's historical great power status. Russia's status in relation to the West is the main criterion by which to define Russia's identity, as the West is the most important Other for Russia. To maintain its historical status as a great power distinct from the West, however, Russia is in need of an identity that permits Russia to be European, and distinct from but equal to the West. Russia's foreign policy strategies towards the West are aimed to get great power recognition from it. The Western vector of Russia's foreign policy is the most important in relation to great power status. Russia's foreign policy reflects a close linkage between cooperation and the country's reassertion of great power status. (Ziegler, 2012:401) The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were both attempts to overcome this identity issue and deal with its contradictions. After a period in the first era after the collapse of the Soviet Union when it seemed that Russia would opt for membership of the Western world, the identity question has reappeared with new vigour in the twenty first century.

Russia as a great power is a central idea of national identity within both the elites and the population. The self-conceptualisation of being a great power has an important role in Russia's domestic policies and external relations. The Russian leadership not only struggles to confirm the country's great power status to its citizens but also strives to be recognized by the international community and the West as a great power. Therefore, great power identity is a central idea of Russian national identity and has a major impact on the country's foreign policy. "The self-image of Russia as a great power exerts a decisive influence on how Russians interpret a particular situation they find themselves in and how interests are defined." (Smith, 2016:129)

Russia has claimed great power status since the reign of Peter I onwards. Following the collapse of the USSR, Russia has continuously stated the necessity to be a great power. "Greatpowerness is a concept that Russians have used to describe their country, and is one way of linking Russia into a more universal system while maintaining differences with the West. The concept is at the core of today's Russian cultural and political self-

understanding." (Smith, 2016:128) For the Russian leadership and most of its citizens Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, and territory. That is, the status of great power is "natural" for Russia and therefore should be treated as equal by other powers. Moreover, Russia is an independent player that is to be respected and has the right to be involved in those global matters which considers important for its own interests.

Russia's great power identity greatly differs from the understanding in the West of what is to be a great power, however. In the West it is often questioned whether Russia is a great power or not. To the Russian elites would inconceivable for Russia not be a great power. As can be seen, between Russia and the West there are different notions of which are the necessary attributes to be considered a great power. As there is no agreement on the criteria an important element is great power identity. The self-assertion of being a great power follows the interests of the nation, and therefore the recognition of greatpowerness is also based on the country's interests and not on objective measures.

Russia's self-perception of being a great power plays a central role in Russia's foreign policy. Therefore, the Russian leadership and elites have underlined Russia's 'great' past to create a consensus in Russia's historical status as great power and "[...] to rebuild Russia's identity and national esteem on the basis of its historical great power status and Russia's integration on that basis into the international order." (Clunan, 2014:289)

There is appreciation of Soviet greatpowerness among most of the population and elites. In this sense, Putin's presidency attempts to restate this 'natural status' for Russia. Hanna Smith analyses the seven articles written by Putin and published in Russian newspapers prior to his return to power in 2012. The idea of being a strong state and a great power was the core message to Russians. (Smith, 2016:138-142) "Russia enters into specific interactions in international politics with the priority of ensuring its position of global power in realistically perceived international politics." (Leichtova, 2014:14)

The majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Similarly, the Russian leadership and most of its citizens consider that Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, and territory. That is, the status of great power is 'natural' for Russia and therefore, it is believed, it should be treated as an equal by other powers. Russia's

greatpowerness is a central element in Russia's foreign policy construction. As noted by Magda Leichtova: "Russia enters into specific interactions in international politics with the priority of ensuring its position of global power in realistically perceived international politics." (Leichtova, 2014:14)

2.4. Conclusions

National identity is performatively constituted., there is no primordial identity whatsoever. National identity is a construct of the state created for the purpose of legitimating itself as distinct. A nation is not a homogeneous entity, however. Within a nation there are different groups and schools of thought which respond differently to international and local conditions and experiences and try to connect foreign policy and national identity. Each group has its own conception of national identity and the relationship of the nation with the international order. Within Russia, these groups have debated with intensity the place of Russia in the world by linking culture, history, and beliefs with current affairs in the international arena.

Russian schools of thought on international affairs are grounded on three major traditions: Westernism, Neo-Eurasianism, and Pragmatic Eurasianism. Each of these highlights different categories to explain the identity of Russia as a nation and consequently the type of foreign policy it should pursue. These traditions emerged after the demise of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, they are grounded on the history of Russia's relationship with Europe and on the old debate on Russian identity and Russia's place in the world. These traditions try to show Russia's foreign policy in accord with their view of Russia and the world and the way these traditions show a continuance with the schools of thought that have developed in Russia in the last two hundred years. Behind these schools it is possible to recognize the same old Westernizer/Slavophile dilemmas.

The political and economic elites in the 1990s did not take into account Russia's historical self-conception as a great power sense and therefore its national identity project ultimately failed. Indeed, identity issues became highly contested in Russia in the 1990's among different groups and the conflict was very intense' until one of the visions of the country became predominant. Under Putin, *pragmatist eurasianism* became dominant when

its self-images could hold historical validity and could be successfully applied under current conditions. Consequently, this dominant national identity determines Russia's national interests and the foreign policy it should pursue under Putin's administration. In this sense, the majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Russia's foreign policy under Putin's administration reflects the wide consensus that Russia's identity is that of global great power.

The Russian elite has developed the concept of multipolarity. Russia regards itself as one pole within this multipolar world. The concept of multipolarity was further developed under Putin's presidency. The government declared that multipolarity was the basis of the Russian approach to international politics. Russia believes it has the right to be at the table where important decisions are taken. By the same token, it is essential for Russia to have a manoeuvrable foreign policy and the possibility of retaining the status of an independent strategic centre of power. For Russia, freedom of choice is an asset in the era of multipolarity. Russia sees itself as an independent player that is to be respected and has the right to be involved in those global matters which considers important for its own interests.

For the Russian leadership and leading scholars, the main elements of what makes a country a great power are, especially, hard power elements. In this sense, Russia would have most of the attributes which traditionally have characterised great powers: military strength, territory, leadership in space, and natural resources. Russia's great power identity greatly differs from the understanding in the West of what is to be a great power, especially when it comes to soft power elements. Russia's understanding of soft power greatly differs from that of the West. Russia's soft power is often framed in geopolitical terms. In the West it is often questioned whether Russia is a great power or not.

"Velikoderzhavnost" or greatpowerness is a concept that Russians have used to define its status and position in the world and a way of linking Russia into a more universal global view. For the Russian leadership and most of its citizens Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, and territory. That is, the status of great power is 'natural' for Russia and therefore should be treated as equal by other powers

Russia's greatpowerness is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making.

Russia's Asiatic territory is essential in Russia's self-conceptualisation as a great power. In Chapter Three it will be described how Siberia was conquered, colonised, and developed by the Russian state. This great expansion fed into the Russian national idea and reinforced the necessity to be a great power from the era of Peter the Great onwards. The expansion of Russia to the Pacific coast transformed the country, from a landlocked eastern European state into an immense, multi-ethnic, and bi-continental empire.

Moscow and Peter's town, the city of Constantine,
these are the cherished capitals of the Russian monarchy.
But where is their limit? And where are their frontiers
to the north, the east, the south and the setting sun?
The Fates will reveal them to future generations.
F. Tyutchev

CHAPTER THREE

Russia's Eastward Expansion: History

In the sixteenth century Russia acquired the whole northern part of the Asian continent, a territory of about 13 million square kilometres. It was the conquest and the later colonisation of the immense land that was called *Siberia* that drastically transformed the landlocked Tsardom of Muscovy, from a relatively backward eastern European country into the powerful, vast and multi-ethnic Russian Empire. It "[…] was of momentous historic, economic, political, cultural and geopolitical consequence." (Dmytryshyn, 1991:17)

Arguably, one of the most important long-term factors influencing Russia's national identity was Russian expansion into Northern Asia with the conquest of Siberia. Similarly, *Asiatic Russia* is a prime component contributing to national identity as Russia is conceived as a great power between straddling Western and Asian countries. This chapter attempts to describe how historically Russia has conceptualised Siberia and in particular its role in foreign policy. Similarly, it attempts to examine how the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia have historically pointed in different directions. This chapter will be devoted firstly to an overview of the different periods of Russia's history in Siberia and the North Pacific, and secondly, to the economic history of each period. Contemporary perspectives and views are discussed in subsequent chapters. For analytical convenience Russia's history in Siberia and the North Pacific is divided into four periods: Conquest, 1582-1700 (1); Settlement, 1700-1800 (2); Integration, 1800-1917 (3); and Soviet Siberia 1917-1991 (4). In each time span, the geographic and historic context is noted. At the end, the chapter briefly describes the situation of Russia and its eastern territories in the 1990s (5) and concludes (6) by reflecting upon the four centuries history of Asiatic Russia.

3.1. Conquest 1582-1700

Siberia has not always been part of Russia; indeed, before the sixteenth century there was little knowledge of Siberia; the Ob River constituted the limit of the "known Siberia", and what lay beyond the Siberian Khanate or 'Great Tartary' was a mystery to the Russians. "Yet no one knew that beyond the Ob (River), Greater Siberia comprised the whole of northern Asia between the Urals and the Pacific Ocean." (Bobrick, 1992:38)

In the sixteenth century the Tsardom of Muscovy was almost a landlocked country, it did not have coastlines in the Baltic or in the Black Sea, with the exception of the village of Kholmogory (later Arkhangelsk) in the far north which traded with Europe. (Map 1) At that time, Russia was a major supplier of fur pelts to Europe; fur was the major Russian commodity export. An increase in the demand for fur forced Russia to find alternative sources of fur-pelts in the east where furbearing animals were abundant. (Map 1)

In 1552 the Tsar, Ivan IV *the Terrible*, captured the town of Kazan during his campaign against the Kazan Khanate and opened a path all the way to the east. Thereafter Russia could access freely by water as far as the Ural Mountains, but the Khanate of Sibir lay east of the Urals. Following the takeover of Kazan, the Siberian Khan Yediger acknowledged himself a vassal of the Tsar and paid tribute to Muscovy, but the throne was later assumed by Kuchum in 1563, who in 1571 refused to pay tribute or be a vassal. Subsequently, conditions between the tsardom and the khanate rapidly deteriorated. In response, Ivan IV, who at that time was involved in the Livonian Wars and other internal affairs, transferred the responsibilities for Muscovite interests in the east to the Stroganovs, a family involved in trading activities in the east. He granted them a license to recruit troops and to send them to Siberia in order to take control of the situation. The Stroganovs thus assembled a group of Cossacks led by YermakTimofeevich to conduct what was later known as *the conquest of Siberia*. In 1582 Yermak took Isker and subdued the khanate of Siberia on behalf of Tsar Ivan IV. "By destroying the Siberian Khanate, Yermak opened up the possibility for the Russians to explore Siberia; herein lies the historical significance of his expedition." (Naumov, 2006:58)

Following the takeover of the Siberian Khanate, the Cossacks established the first permanent Russian settlements in Siberia: the *ostrogi* (forts) of Tyumen (1586) and

Tobolsk (1587). The *ostrogi* served as centres for control and conquest. "These new Siberian settlements consisted for many years of small isolated groups of Cossacks, soldiers, traders, government officials and peasant farmers." (Conolly, 1975:33) In 1598 the Tatar resistance eased and the Russians proceeded to the east. "The Russian's advance through Siberia continued for the whole of the following century and was completed in the natural course of events when they reached the Pacific coast." (Naumov, 2006:60)

Russian Cossacks, explorers and *promyshleniki* (fur traders) moved eastwards and began to colonise Siberia by building *ostrogi* at strategic points along the route to the east and to the north: Mangazeia (1601), Tomsk (1604), Turukhansk (1609), Yeniseisk (1618), Ilimsk (1630), Yakutsk (1632), just to name a few. Finally, in 1639 and fifty-three years after building the first Russian settlement in Asia, the Russians reached the Pacific coast and a decade later founded the city of Okhotsk on the coast of what is today the Sea of Okhotsk. Yakutsk became the base for expeditions; from there the Russians moved into the south-eastern regions and explored the surrounding area of Lake Baikal (1644) and the Amur basin (1650). Similarly, from Yakutsk the Russians reached the northeast part of Asia and established the *ostrog* of Anadyrsk in the Chukotsky Peninsula (1650), although they did not go southward to Kamchatka. Thus, by the mid-seventeenth century Russia had asserted control over almost the entire north of Asia, established dozens of *ostrogi*, reached the Pacific and the Arctic coasts and explored the basins of the great Siberian rivers. (Map 2) The isolated, backward, scarce and scattered native peoples could not offer much resistance to the Russian expansion and were subjugated and compelled to pay *yasak* (fur tribute). Russian scholars have frequently discussed the nature of the expansion into Siberia and whether it was a subjugation, oppression or assimilation of the native Siberians. (Collins, 1991) At the beginning of the seventeenth century around 200,000 natives lived in Siberia. From the outset, military expeditions tried to subjugate the population, forcing them to pay *yasak*: if they resisted the Russians used the force of arms. (Map 2)

The Church played an important role in Russia's eastward expansion and although its main objective was to disseminate Christianity among the different peoples of Siberia, it also attended the Russian population and was involved in many other activities.

In should be emphasised that the exploration and colonisation of Siberia was not driven by the government but by explorers, Cossacks and *promyshleniki*, all of them

motivated by Siberia's fur-bearing population. Indeed, the rapid expansion is only explained by the quest for furs. Overcoming the severe climate and lack of roads, they moved across Siberia in search of fur pelts. We should emphasise that the Russians did not cross Asia through the Eurasian steppe but farther to the north along the Siberian taiga and guided by the three main Siberian Rivers (the Ob, Yenisei, and Lena) and their tributaries. It was the easiest means of transportation in this vast territory. By doing so they avoided large centres of civilization in Central Asia (at that time only a few tribes, easy to subdue, lived in the Siberian taiga) - and furthermore, most of the fur-bearing animals in Siberia lived in the taiga. (Map 3)

By the mid-seventeenth century the Russians had reached East Siberia, however, they were too far from European Russia to rely upon it for supplies; and the land of East Siberia could not provide them with the grain, vegetables and fruits they needed. "At the same time, as the lines of communication were stretched across thousands of miles of Asia, Moscow was faced by a problem of mounting proportions: how to feed its people, how to feed the Russian fur traders. The Russians could not subsist on meat alone. Their constitutions required vegetables and, above all, grain." (March, 1996:34) The question of food supplies became the main concern for Russians in the Far East and new sources of food were sought. "From the earliest days of the advance through Siberia, food supplies posed problems of the greatest difficulty and urgency for the Russians. With the exception of small pockets of arable land where grain was grown in west Siberia, Buryatiya, and the Amur basin, Siberia was not a grain-growing country in the early years of Russian occupation." (Conolly, 1975:28)

The search for agriculturally productive lands drove the Russians to the Amur valley in the southeast in the 1640s. Expeditions headed by Poyarkov (1643-1646) and Khabarov (1650-1653) moved along the Amur River and encountered the Tugunskic speaking tribes, who paid tribute to the Manchus, who at that time were trying to gain control of China and the Ming Dynasty. At that time the Russians had little idea of where China might be. "The Russians, of course, had no knowledge of Manchus, let alone awareness that they were in the process of seizing power in the Chinese Empire." (March, 1996:42) The Russians then learned that the tribes and the Manchus were tied to China and became aware that the Empire of China laysouth of the Amur. In spite of that, groups of

Cossacks, often without permission from the government, continued to made incursions and occupied some areas in the Amur Valley, occasioning military conflicts between the Cossacks and the Manchus.

The Manchus regarded the Amur region as part of their empire, and were aggravated by the incursions of the Cossacks. "The occupation of the Amur region was a landmark in Russo-Chinese relations, for it brought the two countries for the first time into direct conflict." (Bassin, 1988) While the Manchus were fighting the Cossacks, several ambassadorial delegations were sent by the Tsar directly from Moscow to Peking to facilitate cooperation and trade with China. The government in Moscow was unaware of the fighting in the east between the Cossacks and the Chinese. Similarly, the Chinese did not know the Cossacks were tied to the Russian Empire.When China described the fighting in the north to the ambassadorial delegations, they urged the Russiansto retreat from the Amur.

Finally, after intense fighting for the control of a Russian *ostrog* in Albazin (1685-1686) between the Chinese and the Russian Cossacks, and the loss of men of both sides, the Chinese and the Russian Empires agreed to begin peace negotiations and to establish a common border. In 1689 after proposals and mutual concessions, the Nerchinsk Russo-Chinese Peace Treaty was signed. In this Treaty, Russia gave up the Amur region, which came under Chinese jurisdiction, but the rest of Siberia was recognised as part of the Tsardom. "It (The Treaty of Nerchinsk) signified international recognition of Siberia becoming part of Russia and that China had relinquished all claims to Siberia. Thus, the Treaty assured the peaceful development of Siberia as part of Russia." (Naumov, 2006:68) The Treaty of Nerchinsk freed Russia from military concerns and enabled it to engage in trade with China, it "[…] inaugurated a period of peace between the two powers that lasted 170 years." (Bobrick, 1992:56) Nonetheless, the border established in the Treaty of Nerchinsk was not accurate and the trade agreement was vague. The Treaty of Kiakhta (1727) accurately delineated the border and regulated trade between both countries. Thereafter, Russia began to obtain the benefits of trade with China

After securing their border with China in 1689, the Russians concentrated on Asia's northeast. The Russians first reached Chukotka in 1640s and began to explore that remote land. At that time the question of whether Asia and North America were separate continents

or whether they were joined somewhere in the north remained unanswered. An expedition led by the explorer S. Dezhnev sailed in 1646 from Anadyrsk west to the Kolyma River and then north to the Arctic Ocean, reached the north-eastern tip of Siberia, rounded the Chukotka peninsula and passed through the strait dividing Asia and North America (the Bering Strait). Dezhnev was unaware of this, however, he did not know he was proving that Asia and America were separate continents. His report never reached Moscow and was stockpiled in Yakutsk, remaining unknown until the mid-eighteenth century. Thus, Russia and the world still did not know whether Russia and America were joined or separated. (Map 4)

The Russians only in 1695 did they move southwards to Kamchatka, which they believed to be an island. In 1696 Atlasov led an expedition from Anadyrsk to explore Kamchatka. After intense fighting he was able to impose *yasak* on the natives and continued moving south of the peninsula where he learned about the Kuril Islands and about larger islands farther south where people lived in 'stone cities'. (See Bobrick, 1992:38) By establishing several *ostrogi* Russia gradually strengthened their control of the Kamchatka Peninsula, explored the Kuril Islands and learned that the larger islands in the south were part of Japan, although they still did not see the islands or know where Japan was on the map.

As previously mentioned, the conquest of Siberia was not state-sponsored territorial expansion. In theory, as Basil Dmytryshyn observes, the Tsar held unrestricted authority and was the owner of those vast lands. Nevertheless, neither authority in Moscow had a master plan for Siberia nor had the entire region under their control. For the most part of the seventeenth century Russia was in a state of political turmoil and involved in different wars (the Times of Trouble, the wars against Sweden, the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). The government could barely support the expansion into Asia, and therefore, it partly delegated the responsibility of controlling the Russian land east of the Urals. It was a close relationship between the state and private practice; a mutual dependency existed between them. The very first motivation for the exploration and later conquest of Siberia was mercantile-motivated; it was the result of the quest of furs in the east. (Bassin, 1988)

3.1.1. Economy

From the times of Kievan Rus, the fur trade occupied an important place in the Russian economy. For many centuries, the furs of different animals constituted one of the most valuable commodities of the Russian state for export and it was one of the main sources of Muscovy's foreign trade.

> From the earliest times the Russians trafficked in the skins of the animals inhabiting the forest-covered plains of Eastern Europe. For several centuries the Russians supplied Europe with most of its furs. […] Thus, both as a means of livehood and as a vital force in the expansion of the Russian people the fur trade occupied a place of high importance in the history of Russia. (Fisher, 1943:17)

Mercantilist ideas began to penetrate Russia in the seventeenth century. The Russian government needed sources of revenue and Siberia did not have precious metals (they had not been discovered yet) but it had something valuable: furs. Through the fur trade Russia could thus acquire the gold and silver it lacked. (Bassin, 1988) Bobrick argues that the Russians "[…] followed the route to Empire like any other European powers that crossed the sea. Instead of gold or silver, spices and other prized commodities which the Europeans wrung from their overseas colonies of India, Mexico or Peru, it was 'soft gold' in the form of the world's finest furs." (Bobrick, 1992:67) Furs in Siberia had the function of precious metals.

The different groups of people settling in Siberia began to transform it into a Russian land: *promyshleniki*, state employees, peasants, merchants, prisoners, dissenters, members of the ecclesiastical missions and explorers. All these people played different parts in the conquest and there is no agreement about who played the leading role. Sometimes they were responding to the Tsar's orders and sometimes just acting on their own. "All them had to work together to move across the vast area, to overcome the difficult physical environment, to explore Siberia's remote regions and to exploit its resources." (Collins, 1991:87)

By the mid-seventeenth century the market for Russian furs in Europe began to decline and Russia started to view the Chinese market as an alternative source of revenue. This was what thrust Russia forward, to penetrate the Chinese market. Russia also realised that it could take geographic advantage of Siberia and be an intermediary between East and West. In the seventeenth century Siberia was a 'colonial commodity'; the abundance of fur-

bearing animals was its only value for Russia. By the end of the century, it had become valuable also for the accessibility of Russian furs to Chinese markets. (Bassin, 1988)

From the late seventeenth century, fur-bearing animals began to be scarce. Early in the century, for instance, sables were abundant but following uncontrolled hunting, by the late century they had almost disappeared. "The fur population in these territories began to disappear. The tremendous demand for, and the consequent fabulous value of furs dictated that they would be hunted intensively. The fur-bearing population was exhausted by the mid-seventeenth century, and that of eastern Siberia by 1700." (Bassin, 1988:11)

Economic activity in Siberia thus proceeded from mere hunting to farming, trading and construction. Similarly, the population of *promyshleniki* considerably shrunk by the end of the century. Meanwhile, the peasant population steadily increased and by the late seventeenth century, peasants constituted the majority of the Russian population in Siberia (more than 50 percent) and farming had become an important occupation for Russians in Siberia.

Due to migration (voluntary, government initiated and exile), by the late seventeenth century the Russian population in Siberia outnumbered the native population. In 1700 more the total population of Siberia was around 500,000 and more than 300,000 were Russians. (Naumov, 2006)

Migration from European Russia to Siberia was a major boost for economic development, as Russians established *ostrogi* and ports than later transformed into Siberian towns and cities; this changed the course of the historical development of Russia and Siberia. "The Russians brought their skills, economic practices, culture and mode of life and began vigorous exploration of the new land. […] Events in the seventeenth century laid the basis for the future development of Siberia as part of Russia." (Naumov, 2006:82)

3.2. Settlement, 1700-1800

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, only western Siberia had been colonised, and the eastern regions remained virtually uninhabited. Russia had only one small settlement on the Pacific shore: the port of Okhotsk. Thus, "[…] the security of the Okhotsk seaboard and Kamchatka became a matter of more urgent concern." (Bobrick, 1992:137)

In the sixteenth century the idea arose in Europe that a northern sea route connecting Europe to the Pacific Ocean existed, and consequently, Europeans began to explore the Arctic Ocean and reached the Taimyr Peninsula. They could not go farther east, however. In the seventeenth century, Russian explorers moved along the river basins of the great three Siberian Rivers and reached Siberia´s Arctic shoreline, but they did not have the means to go farther. Thus, it remained a mystery whether it was possible to reach the Pacific Ocean by a northern route through the Arctic Ocean or not. Peter I recognised the great advantage Russia would enjoy if the route existed: it would open the way for a new trading route and the possibility of acquiring the fur of sea otters and other mammals in North America. In addition, he was urged by intellectuals such as Leibniz to find out whether there was a passage between Asia and America, or whether the continents were joined. Rumours of the proximity of America and Asia and the existence of a strait between them (the one Dezhnev had confirmed, although this was still unknown) were widespread.

In 1724, three years after the Great Northern War with Sweden had eased and a month before he died, Peter the Great entrusted Vitus Bering with the execution of an expedition to determine whether Asia and America were joined and to find a route to North America. In 1728 the expedition led by Bering and his lieutenant Chirikov sailed from the port of Okhotsk to Kamchatka, crossed the peninsula and sailed northward. In the summer Bering rounded the extremity of the continent (the Chukchi Peninsula) and without realising it, passed through the strait separating Asia and America (now the Bering Strait). Due to restricted visibility, he could not see Alaska and therefore did not realise how close America was, but he confirmed that both continents were in fact separate.

In 1730 the new Empress Anna proposed that Bering undertake a second mission which was later called the Great Northern Expedition or Second Kamchatka Expedition. This expedition was a collaborative effort with a contingent from the Imperial Academy of Science, which Peter I had only recently created in 1724. “What began as a new attempt by Bering to chart the far north western coast of North America soon expanded into what has been described as one of the most elaborate, thorough, and expensive expeditions ever sent by any government any time.” (Lincoln, 1993:106) The Great Northern Expedition was divided into three different vectors. The first aimed to explore the Kuril Islands, to discover a route to Japan and to establish commercial relations with the Japanese. The second

segment was intended to explore the Russian Arctic and to chart Siberia's Arctic shoreline from Arkhangelsk to Chukotka. The third vector, under command of Bering, proposed to sail from Kamchatka to locate the coast of North America. The men from the Imperial Russian Academy of Science who were attached to the expeditions intended to carry out historical, geographical, ethnographical and linguistic research into Siberia.

In fact, the Great Northern Expedition pushed the development of science in Siberia. The scholars and members of the Imperial Academy of Science who joined the expedition, such as J. Gmelin, G. F. Müller and G. Steller, gathered information about Siberia's history, geography and ethnography. Indeed, they were the first to produce a general and complete description of Siberia.

When the Russians reached the Pacific Ocean they were unaware of the existence of Japan. Only after exploring the Kamchatka Peninsula and the Kuril Islands in the first decades of the eighteenth century did they realised that Japan lay south. In 1739 the first vector of the Great Northern Expedition set off from Kamchatka and reached the Japanese Island of Honshu (the largest island of Japan), however, relations with the Japanese could not be established until the mid-nineteenth century.

The mission of the second group was to chart the northern coast of Russia, from the White Sea to the eastern end of the Asian continent. This would confirm the existence of the northern route connecting Europe and the Pacific Ocean. This mission was divided into five different segments and even though not all the segments were completed (specially the last vector from the Lena River to the Bering Strait), most of the exploration and survey of the Russian Arctic shore was accomplished by 1740. (See March, 1996:94-95)

The third mission was undertaken by Bering. In 1740, he founded the town of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski from where he and his lieutenant Chirikov sailed to the north the following year. They embarked in two different ships, one under the leadership of Bering and the other under the leadership of Chirikov. They tried to keep the ships together but a storm separated them and they never rejoined company. Chirikov reached the coast of Alaska but due to circumstances was not able to land and explore the shoreline; he and his crew could barely manage to get back to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski. Bering's expedition was able to land on Kayak Island in Alaska and briefly explored it; however, due to the lack of supplies and the fact that Bering and most of his crew were severely ill, they decided to

return rapidly to Kamchatka. Weather conditions hindered their way back and they had to winter on an uninhabited island (now the Bering Island) near the Commander Islands, where Bering and many of his crew died. Finally, the survivors headed toward Petropavlovsk the following summer. (Map 5)

The Great Northern Expedition was of paramount importance. "Surveys of the arctic coast, new maps, information about Japan, the official discovery of the northern coast of North America and final proof of the existence of a strait between Asia and America, all represented new knowledge of far-reaching significance." (Black, 1991:65) Following the Great Northern Expedition, the Russian Empire began to settle and colonise the easternmost part of their land. Okhotsk and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski became the nucleus of the Russian population in the Far East. "[…] (The Great Northern Expedition) had revealed how tenuous Russian occupation of the region still was, with unmanageably long supply lines, and virtually no development of the natural resources there contributing to the maintenance of life." (Bobrick, 1992:161)

For the Russian government the results did not justify the huge amount of money spent on those expeditions, and after the death of the Empress Anna the government in Saint Petersburg did not support further missions. 'Peter the Great's momentum' had been halted. "Although it was the Russians who first approached the shores of Alaska in the early 1740s, the Russian Empire would not establish a permanent presence in North America until the lapse of almost half a century." (March. 1996:96) Interest in the Russian Far East and North American lands waned for more than 50 years during the reigns of Elizabeth and Catherine the Great (1741-1796). Catherine II 'did not exhibit the passion' of Peter I for 'exploration and discovery'. (March, 1996:79) She was more concerned in European affairs.

Without being sponsored by the government, fur traders faced many difficulties during the reign of Catherine II. After the Great Northern Expedition, mostly private traders seeking furs were the only Russian presence in North America. Hunting and trading expeditions to the Aleutian Islands were organised by groups of Cossacks and *promyshleniki.* These expeditions were carried out under poor conditions. Bobrick observed that 'the familiar pattern of the Siberian conquest was repeated' but only farther and with more difficult conditions. (Bobrick, 1992) Crossing Sineria by river was not the same as

crossing the northern waters of the Pacific Ocean. For more than fifty years only individual enterprises explored the North Pacific. Eventually, in 1781 a fur trade company was formed by G. Shelikov and M. Gulikov. Its partnership sought to establish a permanent company to trade furs and make explorations in North America. In 1784 they claimed Alaska for Russia and established the first Russian settlement in Alaska, Three Saints Harbour. Shelikov asked Catherine II to assert Russian control over Alaska and its resources, to establish permanent settlements, and to propagate the Orthodox faith (following the example of the English East India Company, a monopoly subordinated to the government but with jurisdiction of its own). He believed that this would make fur trade more profitable and would help to assert control of the lands, but Catherine II did not accede to his request.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the North Pacific had become a disputed land and Russians began to be challenged by the British, the Spanish, the Americans and the French, which meant that the exclusive Russian trade in furs was at danger. Catherine II died in 1796 and her son Paul took the throne. He believed it was time for Russians to consolidate their presence in the coastal waters it claimed, and thus, in 1799 Emperor Paul granted a monopoly of fur trade to the state-sponsored Russian American Company managed by N. Rezanov.The Russian American Company was in charge of colonisation in North America. A. Baranov became the chief manager of the company for operations in American colonies and founded the towns of Slavorossia and Novoarkhangelsk, the first Russian settlements on America´s mainland. The problem of supplies only deteriorated, however, (it took three months to move supplies from Okhotsk to Alaska, five months from Irkutsk to Alaska, and one year from Saint Petersburg to Alaska). The lack of basic needs hindered the development of Russian America. (Map 6)

3.2.1. Economy

During the reign of Peter I, Siberia’s fur trade became a state monopoly and the most of the Russian fur traffic in Asia was dominated by the state. The state´s monopoly of furs in the eighteenth century was planned so that the state could acquire things that it could not do otherwise: luxuries and military equipment. Due to the almost complete exhaustion of fur-bearing animals in Siberia, the fur trade in the eighteenth century became maritime and the

fur traders hunted sea otters in the North Pacific, the Aleutians, Kamchatka and Alaska. By the mid-century Russia still continued to export fur pelts to Europe, but there was acontinuous decline. "Throughout the eighteenth century, too many Russian furs went to Europe, especially to Leipzig. But the center of gravity of the Russian fur trade shifted then from the West to the East, the Russians discovered in Asia a new market as great as the one they were losing in Europe." (Fisher, 1943:210) The principal market for Russia's sea otter pelts was China.

The fur trade had dominated the Siberian economy for almost two centuries, but after Catherine II abolished the monopoly of the fur trade in 1762, this activity fundamentally declined. Other economic activities began to flourish; however, "[…] the colonial territories that had been acquired in its course lost their fundamental attraction." (Bassin, 1988:15) The government of Russia had lost interest in Siberia by the second half of the eighteenth century. The fur population had been exhausted, and mining and other new industries could not at that time replace the revenue from fur. Siberia was seen as a frozen land, a colonial burden.

As the fur trade declined commerce with China grew. Although Russians mainly used furs to pay for Chinese goods, a great diversity of goods passed along the route, and this helped southern Siberian cities to develop and be more prosperous. By the same token, trade routes shifted from northern cities in the Siberian taiga to southern cities Thus, people began to move from the north to the south of Siberia, and as a result, northern cities gradually declined, and southern cities such as Omsk, Tobolsk, Tomsk and Irkutsk were settled more intensively. The town of Kiakhta, on the border with China, became the centre of trade with China. In Kiakhta "the Russians traded furs, skins, leather, ginseng and coarse cloth for fine Chinese cottons, dried rhubarb, silks and tea." (Lincoln, 1993:144)

The ferrous metallurgy industry developed. Iron production mills and iron smelters were built. Consumer goods, food and handicraft production formed part of the economy. Intra-trade and foreign trade started to grow, and communications developed.

Mining began to be important and boosted the development of different cities. Russia began to transform itself into one of the largest producers of precious metals (especially of gold and copper).

Siberia's population growth continued in the eighteenth century and pushed Siberia's economic development. At that time "Siberia gained notoriety as a place of exile and confinement as a result of the increasingly frequent banishment there of the victims of a sequence of palace conspiracies and coups" (Wood, 1991:7), however, this was not the only reason for population growth, which was the result of multiple factors such was the need for a workforce, new expeditions, and commerce with China, among other things. These factors caused Siberia's population to grow faster. Many people also settled in Siberia to escape from the repressive system and the lack of freedom in European Russia. Indeed, voluntary resettlement accounted for 85 percent of the total number of settlers and only 15 percent was involuntary (half were exiles). In the early eighteenth century the total population of Siberia was about 500,000 people, of which over 300,000 were Russians and fewer than 200,000 were natives. By end of the century, the total population of Siberia was 1.2 million, of which 850,000 were Russians and 350,000 were natives. (See Naumov, 2006:100)

In the early eighteenth century peasants constituted 60 percent of the population, in 1800 they accounted for 90 percent of the total population. Even when they paid taxes and carried out the work imposed by the government, Siberian peasants lived better than their counterparts in European Russia. Similarly, farming developed rapidly, in the seventeenth century there were around one million square kilometres of arable land (mostly in western parts of Siberia).

Even though the peasantry accounted for more than half the inhabitants, "the population of Siberia came from diverse social backgrounds. It included all major groups of Russian population: peasants, the nobility, merchants, petty bourgeois, the clergy, Cossacks, craftsmen, exiles and the indigenous inorodts." (Naumov, 2006:100) The other groups were smaller and accounted for only ten percent of the population overall.

The clergy was mainly in charge of cultural development and continued to play an important role in education; it established several dioceses and explored remote areas where members studied different Siberian peoples. The bourgeois constituted the bulk of the urban population, the merchants traded nationally and internationally (mainly with China), workers performed key jobs in industries and the Cossacks were mainly in charge of keeping order (especially in border towns). "(In the eighteenth century) Siberia had

changed from a land of scattered trading posts into a more closely held part of the Russian Empire. Towns and cities began to flourish, trade was prospering and colonists were beginning to put down deeper roots." (Lincoln, 1993:142) Roads and means of transportation improved. A southern road across the Siberian steppe was built (*the Great Siberian Trakt*) and was being used by the mid-century. The *Siberian Trak t*meant that the rivers declined as trading routes and also enabled Siberia to become better integrated with Russia, and less isolated. For instance, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the journey from Saint Petersburg to Okhotsk took around 126 days, to Nerchinsk around 75 days and to Western Siberian towns such as Tyumen, Toms, Omsk and Yeniseisk it took around 60 days. (See Lincoln, 1993:143)

3.3. Integration, 1800-1917

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian government began to recognise that conditions in Siberia were different to those in European Russia and that it should be governed differently in order to integrate it with the empire. (Raeff, 1956:8) "After the fall of Napoleon, a strong feeling had begun to develop in St. Petersburg that the time had come to integrate Siberia into the structure of the Russian Empire." (Lincoln, 1993:157) M. Speranskii was thus appointed Governor of Siberia in 1819. He was instructed to prepare a draftof reforms aimed to modernise the government of Siberia. He ascertained that the solution was in developing the resources of Siberia beyond the fur trade, whichhad to be replaced by modern industries, trade and agriculture. By the same token, he urged the Russian government to reform the administrative system in order to establish the rule of law and to restrict the authority of governors. As a result, the *Siberian reforms* were implemented in 1822. The reforms involved: a reorganisation of the exile system, a scheme of administering indigenous populations, and a reorganisation of the administration system. They were planned so as to end the colonial regime; Siberia was to be governed like the rest of the empire rather than as a colony. "The Siberian reforms of 1822 broadly established the system for administering Siberia until 1917." (Naumov, 2006:98) Marc Raeff calls the *Siberian Reforms* the 'second discovery of Siberia.' They transformed

Siberia from ‘a neglected and exploited colonial backyard into a full-fledged province of the empire.’ (Raeff, 1956:3)

As mentioned above, Russian America was experiencing problems feeding its people, particularly the fur traders (especially with grain, fruit and vegetables). The long food supply line from near Lake Baikal forced the Russians to seek alternative sources of food. Rezanov sailed southwards and in 1806 reached San Francisco Bay. Russia aspired to penetrate the area further, and established a Russian settlement near San Francisco (Fort Ross), however, due to political realities the New Spain could not become the source of food that Russia expected. Hawaii was seen as an alternative solution but this did not materialise in practice. Fort Ross became self-sufficient in terms of food, and could partially provide supplies to the Russian colonies. The independence of Mexico, which the Russian Empire did not recognise, made the situation more difficult. “Fort Ross greatly exceeded any advantages the site was intended to provide, it was sold in 1839.” (March, 1996:110) The Russian American Company attempted to provision the Russian America by various means, but they came to nothing.

Russian America at its height was inhabited by only 1,000 Russians, 500 in Novoarkhangelsk. Russian settlements in North America did not grow into towns as in Siberia. Furthermore, the Russian American Company was not profitable, and the fur trade, the raison d'être of the company, drastically reduced. After the seizure of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski during the Crimean War, the vulnerability of Russia’s possessions in America became evident, and the inability of the empire to defend them. Finally, in 1866 Alexander II decided to sell Alaska to the United States.

Russia had aspired to occupy the Amur Valley since the mid-seventeenth century, however its trade with China, essential for Siberia’s economy, restrained them. In the aftermath of the First Opium War, however, Russia began to feel threatened by the expansionism of the United States, France and Britain at the expense of the growing weakness of China.When Russians learned that China had not occupied the Amur region in more than 150 years, they aspired to occupy it. “The moment was propitious for Russia. China, strong and secure at the time of Nerchinsk (1689), was now torn by civil strife and unable effectively to oppose the Russian plans for the annexation of the Far Eastern territory, from which the Russians had been expelled by the Manchus in 1689.” (Conolly,

1975:31) The annexation of the Amur would provide Russia with an ice-free southern port that could ultimately prevent European powers from colonising East Siberia. (Map 8)

In 1847, N. Muravev was appointed governor of East Siberia. He believed that to effectively rule East Siberia it was essential to command the mouth of the Amur River, and that to effectively defend the Siberian coast on the Pacific, the Amur region had to be promptly annexed. "Muravev was extremely fearful that, if Russia did not act, the British and Americans would shortly be on hands of the Amur." (March, 1996:124) First, Russia founded the city Nikolaevsk-na-Amure at the mouth of the river. (Map 8) Finally, in 1858 during the Second Opium War "(the) Russian Foreign Minister Gorchakov observed that it was now the time to activate Russian Far Eastern policy." (March, 1996:127) By acting as mediator between China and European powers in the Second Opium War, Russia demanded that China cede all the territory north of the Amur to Russia and the region between the Ussuri River and the Pacific Ocean. By later signing the Treaty of Peking (1860), Russia confirmed the possession of the south-eastern part of Siberia, and thus more than two centuries after Khabarov claimed that important region, Muravev succeeded in transferring it to Russia. This resulted in the foundation of the all year ice-free port of Vladivostok (1860). It should be noted that this expansion, unlike that in the seventeenth century, had a political dimension and was planned and premeditated, as Russia sought to consolidate its holdings in northeast Asia.

By the end of the nineteenth century Russia had expanded deep into Central Asia and the coastal region of Amur in the Pacific, however, as the Russian Empire expanded, its territory became more difficult to defend and the country was concerned about retaining its far-eastern territories. The Russian government believed that communication had to be improved in Asiatic Russia by building telegraphs lines and railroads. In the early 1890s the Finance Minister S. Witte "[…] saw Russian Asia as a vast treasure house that could be tapped only by means of a railway system […] that railroad was the only way to ensure exploitation of Russian lands and to guarantee their retention in the empire." (March, 1996:151)

Since the takeover of the Siberian Khanate three centuries before, Russians had mostly used the Siberian rivers for transportation, however, routes across the Siberian taiga were not straight lines and the harsh climate made transportation possible only a few

months each year. The *Siberian Trakt*, constructed a century earlier, reduced times and distances, but it still took a long time to cross Siberia. Debate about the necessity of a railway crossing Siberia from the Urals to the Pacific commenced; many proposals were made but were not considered until the 1880s, by which time the idea that a railway had to be built across Siberia was generally accepted. Basically, military leaders and other railroad proponents claimed that the railway would bring economic growth and would be an essential means to defend the country. Conservatives opposed it, fearing that it would create a sense of regionalism among Siberians and that European Russia's economy would be challenged.

In 1891 with the support of Alexander III, the Tsarevich Nikolai promulgated an edict authorising the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Due to the distances and climate conditions the construction was divided into different segments: Chelyabinsk to the Ob River, the Ob River to Irkutsk, Irkutsk to Khabarovsk, and Khabarovsk to Vladivostok. The stretch from Chelyabinsk to Irkutsk became operational in 1898 and the segment from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok in 1897, however, due to the difficult terrain (permafrost) the segment from Irkutsk to Khabarovsk was not yet constructed. "By the end of the century, therefore, it was possible to travel from Moscow to Vladivostok by taking rail to Irkutsk, a ferry (or sledge) across Lake Baikal, rail to Sretensk, river boat (or sledge) down the Shilka and Amur to Khabarovsk, and rail on to Vladivostok." (March, 1996:155) The stretch from Sretensk to Khabarovsk was too costly and an alternate solution was sought. Witte was able to convince China to allow Russia to build and operate a segment of the railway across Manchuria, thus linking Chita to Vladivostok in the shortest distance. The railroad, called the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), became operational in 1903. Russia concluded that the segment between Chita and Khabarovsk still had to be built, however, so that the entire railway could travel through Russian territory. The Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Vladivostok across Russian territory was not operational until 1916. As March observes, beyond the shortcomings it was a huge engineering achievement, "[…] a daunting effort through forests, over mountains, along steep river valleys and atop swamplands and permafrost." (March, 1996:150)

As a consequence of the Sino-Japanese War, China was forced to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). It signified the end of the special tributary relationship between Korea

and China, the recognition by China of Korea's independence, and China ceded Taiwan to Japan. The European powers, Russia and Japan interpreted it as a sign of vulnerability and 'virtually' partitioned the Chinese Empire into spheres of influence. (March, 1996:168) This resulted in several concessions made to European powers such as Germany, Britain and France. Similarly, Russia obtained the leasehold of the Liao-Tung Peninsula, the ice-free ports of Talien and Port Arthur and a railroad connecting these ports to the Chinese Eastern Railway. This situation instigated the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901), a nationalistic movement supported by the Emperor that declared war on foreign powers. The rebellion was crushed in 1901 and Russian troops occupied Manchuria and prepared a draft to convert it in a sort of Russian protectorate. In response to the gradual growth of Russian influence in Manchuria, Great Britain and Japan formed an alliance in order to counteract Russian presence in China and urged Russian troops to retreat from Manchuria. Russian troops were not completely evacuated, however, and still controlled some parts of Manchuria: The Chinese Eastern Railway, the Liao-Tung Peninsula and the railway connecting both of them.

The annexation of the Amur Region brought Russia closer to Japan, and therefore, territorial issues had to be settled. The Treaty of Saint Petersburg (1875) meant that Russia came into possession of Sakhalin Island, and Japan of the Kuril Islands. The Treaty of Peking (1860) resulted in a 17 kilometres border between Korea and the Russian Empire (the Russians ensured that their coast would extend to Korea in order to prevent a European presence in northeast China). (Map 9) Russia approached Korea, and the Russo-Korean Treaty was signed in 1884, and the Russo-Korean Trade Agreement in 1888. Russia's interests in Korea grew and conflicts with Japan over this matter increased following the sign of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In the first years of the twentieth century, Japan demanded that Russia acknowledge Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria and its freedom to intervene in Korea, however, Russia was not interested in promptly sorting out the conflict of interests between both nations in China and Korea. In response, Japan broke off diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire and declared war. Japan occupied the South Manchurian Railway, the ports in the Liao-Tung Peninsula and defeated Russian Naval Forces. Neither Russia nor Japan was interested in continuing the war, however, and signed the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905) which resulted in the division of Manchuria into Russia's

north and Japan's south: Japan was given the Liao-Tung Peninsula, and the southern part of the South Manchurian Railway. Russia had to cede half Sakhalin Island and recognise Japanese interests in Korea. Japan annexed Korea five years later.

In the late nineteenth century Russia established itself in northeast Asia in a territorial and political sense, at a time when China grew weaker and Japan stronger. This will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

3.3.1. Economy

The Siberian Governor, Speranskii, was one of the first to conceive of Siberiaasa land of civilisation and natural resources rather than a mere colony replete with fur-pelts. For more than two centuries rare pelts had been the 'Russian gold' due to the high demand for them in Europe and China, and the lack of gold and silver in European Russia, however, in the eighteenth century supply and demand began to diminish, and Russia had to replace them as the main source of revenue. At the end of the seventeenth century the first silver mine was discovered and by the mid-eighteenth century the first gold mine, although it provided just a fraction of the silver and gold needed to replace furs. By the early nineteenth century the situation changed. Siberia was re-explored, and gold and other precious metalswere found throughout Siberia and mined (especially in the regions with the harshest climates, such as Yakutia and Kolyma). By 1845 Siberian mines produced 40 percent of the gold mined in the world. (Lincoln, 1993:188)

In its first 300 years the Russian population in Siberia grew slowly, however, in the late nineteenth century it increased drastically as a result of government policies, the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the significant expansion of land for agriculture. "Siberia's population growth was the basis of its socio-economic development. The settlement of Siberia intensified during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." (Naumov, 2006:130) Following the abolition of serfdom in 1861, a massive migration was initiated to different parts of Russia, and Siberia was the principal region for colonisation. "In settling this harsh and distant territory, the migrants laid new roads, built new villages, cleared the forests for agriculture and cultivated crops. The major role in the economic development of Siberia from the mid nineteenth century to the early

twentieth century was thus played by peasants, workers and artisans." (Goryushkin, 1991:140) In 56 years almost seven million people migrated to Siberia; from a population of 2.7 million in 1858 it grew to a population of 10.3 million in 1914 (90% Russians). (Goryushkin, 1991:141)

Peasants continued to be the main population group. From 1861 to 1914, 3.8 million of peasants migrated (two million in 1906-1914 alone). Agriculture continued to be the leading sector within the Siberian economy. Peasant lands increased substantially due to mass colonisation. Four regions in the south developed in particular: the West Steppes, Altai, the Basin of the Yenisei River and Blagoveshchensk. (Naumov, 2006:137) As a result of western methods and the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, farms developed, and agricultural production steadily increased and became more profitable.

Despite the importance of the massive migration of peasants, other groups of migrants such as workers, artisans and merchants continued to play an important role in the development of Siberia in the nineteenth century. The emergence of industries and mines increased the number of hired workers in many areas. Their wages were higher than those of their counterparts in European Russia, although the living conditions were harder.

We think it is worth emphasising that Siberia has not been only a land of punishment and exile, "[…] it should be remembered that over the centuries, exiles and deportees have only accounted for a tiny fraction of the total population of Siberia, the vast majority of which was there as a result of voluntary emigration, fortune seeking or the process of natural procreation." (Wood, 1991:4) At its height, exiles accounted only for nine per cent of Siberia's population.

Katorga (forced labour camps) and *Ssylka* (resettlement in remote areas) were some of the most common penalties used by the judicial system of the Russian Empire. From the late sixteenth century thousands of thieves, robbers, murders, and other criminals, were condemned to *Katorga* or *Ssylka* in Siberia. "Together, *katorga* and *ssylka* helped to provide the labor and settlers needed to incorporate Siberia into the Russia Empire." (Lincoln, 1993:164) At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, literate and well educated people were exiled to Siberia. The first political exiles were participants in the Decembrist uprising in Saint Petersburg in 1825, and thereafter the number of political exiles continuously increased and dissenters and members of the *intelligentsia* such as

Dostoyevsky, Bakunin or Chernychevsky were exiled to Siberia. This had an impact on the cultural development of the region and may have helped to spread liberal and revolutionary ideas. A cohesive public opinion began to form in Siberia by the mid-nineteenth century; it was characterised by its critical orientation and influenced by the emerging regionalist movement (*Sibirskoe oblanichestvo*). For instance, in 1882 in his book *Siberia as a Colony*, Yadrinstsev complained that European Russia viewed Siberia as a colony. He argued that Siberia needed greater autonomy.

The transport industry was essential for economic development: steam power river boats, vessels, wharves, maritime navigation and the Trans-Siberian Railway. "The Trans-Siberian gave a new impetus to the economic development of Siberia. New industries appeared serving the railway and navigation […] Electric power stations were built in towns." (Naumov, 2006:134) Gold mining and coal production was pushed by the railway. At the same time, urban populations grew steadily in cities along the Trans-Siberian Railway such as Omsk, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk and Vladivostok, and some cities distant to the railway declined.

> In short, the Trans-Siberian Railway dramatically transformed the entire area through which it passed, fostering agriculture and industry along the line, and effectively ending Siberia's colonial status by bringing Vladivostok to within ten day's journey of the capital […] Meat, dairy, and grain production, and prodigiousshipments of timber, minerals, and hides all helped to bolster Russia's import and export trade. (Bobrick, 1992:381)

The mass arrival of new settlers resulted in Siberia becoming more densely populated and integrated with Russia. "Nonetheless, despite the intensive growth of some industrial businesses, by 1917 Siberia, on the whole, remained a backward region as far as industry was concerned. Its share in Russia's total industrial production was only 3.5 percent." (Naumov, 2006:136) That the main element in the colonisation of Siberia was the peasantry "restricted and impeded the economic development of the region under Tsardom". (Conolly, 1975:34)

Due to the mass migration, the government had to focus more on the social and economic development of Siberia. Treadgold (1947) noted that there were two contrasting views, belonging to those who sought to achieve Russian Imperial interests in Asia and those who were concerned about the colonisation and economic development of Siberia. The former saw the Trans-Siberia Railway as an aid to migration whereas the latter treated

it as a mere military means to achieve the imperial interests of Russia in China and Korea.In the final years of the Russian Empire, tsarist statesmen such as Witte and Stolypin were concerned about the needs of Asiatic Russia and encouraged migration as a way to develop the region. “In 1914 there were ten million people who made up the new Siberian society. They were animated by thought of their own social and economic needs rather than dreams of new conquests or battles in the Far East.” (Treadgold, 1947)

Meanwhile in the late nineteenth century newspapers were founded, and libraries, public museums and theatres opened in major Siberian towns. In 1888 the first university opened in Siberia: The Tomsk University. In the early twentieth century universities opened in Vladivostok, Irkutsk and Tomsk. Scientific research was carried out by different academies and government institutions. Literacy rates rose steadily, and by 1917, 27 percent of the population of Siberia was literate (in European Russia it was 47%). “Despite the positive quantitative improvement in education, however, Siberia was markedly inferior to European Russia.” (Naumov, 2006:141)

The massive arrival of around seven million new settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century changed the reality of Siberia. It transformed Asiatic Russia from a mere colony for the fur business and exiles, into an organic part of the Russian Empire.

3.4. Soviet Siberia, 1917-1991

In Siberia, before the October Revolution, “[…] (people) were suffering from war-weariness, but on the whole, the region remained loyal to the monarchy.” (Naumov, 2006:155) By the end of 1917, the Bolsheviks established Soviet power in different Siberian cities and began to implement communist policies, and at the same time the All Siberian Soviet was formed to run the economy. However, “These socio-economic measures caused uncontrolled inflation and price rises, anarchy and a collapse of production, as well as shortages of food and household goods. This resulted in the almost total paralysis of Siberia’s economic life and aroused bitter feelings in the population including those who had hitherto supported the Bolsheviks.” (Naumov, 2006:164)

Accordingly, groups opposed to the Bolshevik Revolution reacted throughout the country, erupting in 1918 in a civil war between ‘Reds’ and ‘Whites’. The White forces

east of the Urals led by A. Kolchak were the strongest White army and by the end of the year it had the majority of the Asiatic territory under its control. Nonetheless, Kolchak and the Whites were pushed back farther east by the Red Armies in 1919 until finally being defeated in 1920, thus ending the Civil War in a total victory for the Bolsheviks.

The Allied powers intervened in the Russian Civil War and backed the Whites. The motives and objectives of this intervention have been the subject of debate. (Carley, 1989) The intervention was limited in European Russia but was more extensive in the Far East, mainly due to the involvement of Japanese troops. The Allies occupied the port city of Vladivostok, the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Chinese Eastern Railway, but, they withdrew from Siberia following the defeat of the Whites and only Japanese forces remained. Japan was interested in territorial expansion in the Far East and therefore pushed for Siberian separatism. "The Japanese viewed the revolution in Russia as a sign of weakness that would enable them to pursue their continental ambitions, building on their past successes." (March, 1996:188) In response to this, in 1920 and with the support of Moscow, the Far Eastern Republic was formed as an independent and democratic country. This aimed "[…] to avoid open war between Soviet Russia and Japan, and to bring about the end of the Japanese intervention by peaceful means." (Naumov, 2006:177) Japan failed to establish a government on their own and its forces were compelled to withdraw in 1922. A few days later, the Far Eastern Republic was incorporated to the Soviet Union. By 1922 the Bolsheviks had recovered all Asiatic Russia.

In 1912 Mongolia declared its independence from China and became a Russian protectorate. In 1924, with the support of the Bolsheviks, the Mongolian People's Republic was formed and became the first communist country outside the USSR.

It should be noted that the Soviet Union rejected any sort of imperialism, and thus, avoided any kind of imperial expansion. "Looking toward Asia, the Bolsheviks felt they had to eradicate Russia's imperialistic image by renouncing the interests unfairly exacted by Tsarist Russia, the soviets were ready to give up privileges, concessions, and indemnities but not territories." (March, 1996:202) For instance, when the Chinese Eastern Railway was put into question, and even when the USSR still claimed huge interests in the CER, it was established that both countries would jointly run the railway, although Russian ownership was tacitly assumed. Suspicious of the Soviet Union, the Kuomintang, which

unify much of China and became the ruling party in mainland China in 1928, attempted to remove Russia from operating the CER in 1929, although, Chinese forces were defeated and Russia promptly restored operations.

In the 1930s, Japan extended its empire at the expense of China. In 1931, Japan used the Mukden incident as an excuse to occupy Manchuria, and established the sovereign state of Manchukuo. As a consequence, the ability to retain control of the CER and the 3,000 kilometre border with the new pro-Japanese state was a matter of great concern for the Soviet Union. "The CER soon was an elongated island in a land dominated by Japanese military forces." (March, 1996:213) In 1935, the USSR ceded to Japanese pressure and sold its ownership of the railway's assets to Manchukuo. In 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge incident precipitated the Sino-Japanese War. This drove the Soviet Union to accelerate the development of the region and to implement a special five-year plan for the Far East.

The USSR concluded a non-aggression pact with China and continued to make concessions to Japan, however, tensions between the two countries increased, leading to a clash in 1939 between Soviet and Japanese forces at the Manchukuo-Mongolia border. Japanese attacks were repelled by the Red Army and the conflict escalated into an "undeclared war". (Goldman, 2012) Finally, in August 1939, the Soviet Union launched a devastating counterattack, crushing Japanese troops, killing over 75 percent of Japanese ground forces. (Map 10) Simultaneously, the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact was signed, forcing Japan to retreat and to reach a border understanding with the USSR in 1940. "The Soviet Union therefore found itself between two hostile authorities: militaristic Japan and Hitler's Germany […] (the Soviet Union) pursued the dual goals of not offending the two nations and of trying to divert their expansionist targets other than itself." (March, 1996:214)

In April 1941, a few months before Germany invaded the Soviet Union; the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Treaty was concluded and was to be valid for five years. "This document would have much greater impact on the Soviet fortunes in World War II than any other […] (it) provided for friendly relations and territorial inviolability as well as neutrality in case either power were to become involved in hostilities with a third nation." (March, 1996:222) This pact avoided a two-front war and allowed the release of Soviet troops in the Far East for the defence of Moscow in December 1941.

At the Conference of Yalta (1945) it was stated that in return for its participationin the war against Japan, the Soviet Union should receive Southern Sakhalin, the CER, the Kuril Islands and the use of Liao-Tung peninsula. It was agreed that Manchuria would be under Chinese sovereignty, and the CER would be operated jointly. Thus, as the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet Union denounced the Neutrality Pact and declared war on Japan. More than one million troops mobilised to attack the Japanese forces and the Soviet army occupied Manchuria, North Korea, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands.

In the aftermath of the war, Russia concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the Nationalist government of China. In addition, the USSR pressured China to accede to the agreement for a plebiscite in Mongolia concerning its independence. The Mongols voted for their independence, and China recognised Mongolia as an independent country in 1946.

In addition to the incorporation of the Tuva Republic into the Soviet Union (1944), by mid-century the USSR had detached Mongolia from China, installed a communist government in North Korea, restored its interests in Manchuria, and regained Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. “As a result of World War II, only one nation’s territory was expanded appreciably: that of the Soviet Union.” (March, 1996:227)

During the war, industry, especially military industry, was moved away from the western front and relocated to Siberia. The region became one of the chief centres in the USSR for military production. The relocation of factories and industries allowed the Soviet Union to withstand the German invasion. After the Great Patriotic War, Siberia and the RFE became a “fortress” and developed practically as a ‘closed region’ that barely maintained foreign economic, social, and political ties. For the USSR, Asiatic Russia became a ‘self-sufficient front’ (Valdai, 2012) that would allow the country to survive in the case of a major war.

The conquest of Siberia in the seventeenth century did not immediately give Russia access to the vast resources of the region, many of which were only discovered by the mid-nineteenth century, and the large reserves of coal, gas and oil in Western Siberia and diamonds in East Siberia remained unknown until the mid-twentieth century. These

resources allowed the USSR to secure its position as a global superpower. Siberia supplied most of the natural resources of the country.

In China, the Civil War between nationalists and communists resulted in Mao-Tse-Tung and the communists proclaiming the People's Republic of China in 1949. This was followed by the establishment of the 'Moscow-Beijing Axis'. (March, 1996:231) The Soviet Union agreed to withdraw from Manchuria (CER and Liaodong Peninsula) and both countries maintained peaceful relations until the death of Stalin. The process of de-Stalinisation started by Khrushchev was denounced by Mao, who considered it a sign of weakness. Thereafter, relations between both countries gradually deteriorated as a result of economic and ideological matters (China was in debt for a huge amount of money to the USSR). The ascension of Brezhnev did not lessen tensions and the risk of a military conflict increased.

The territories acquired by Russia from China in the 1860s began to be a source of tension. China was displeased with the border with the Soviet Union. Mao believed that the territories of Mongolia, Amur, and Ussuri were taken by 'unequal treaties'. For instance, in 1964 Mao said, "About a hundred years ago, the area to the east of Lake Baikal became Russian territory and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka, and other areas have been Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our account for this list." (Salisbury quoted in March, 1996:235) Thus, it was suggested that China should strive to regain those territories. This meant that the USSR increasingly viewed China as a threat to its security. An armed conflict broke out in 1969 (the Damansky Incident) when Chinese troops fired at Russian frontier guards patrolling Damansky Island on the Ussuri River, killing more than 50 Soviet soldiers. Two weeks later Soviet troops retaliated and killed more than 800 Chinese soldiers, thus repelling Chinese forces from the island. The armed conflict did not escalate further, and the border remained unchanged.

Although a major war was prevented, both sides deployed a huge number of troops to the border, and relations continued to deteriorate, resulting in a highly militarised and practically closed border. The RFE was no longer a home front but the new front line. The USSR then accelerated the build-up of its military power in Asia, especially in the Far East (land forces, tanks, artillery, jets, bombers, nuclear arsenal and navy). Vladivostok, and later Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski, were established as the centre of the Soviet Pacific Fleet

which became the largest of the Soviet fleets. By the end of the 1970s, around 30 percent of the USSR's military forces were based in Asiatic Russia.

Similarly, several industrial projects were moved from the border area. For instance, due to the vulnerability of the Trans-Siberian railway east of Lake Baikal and in order to provide a secure alternative route for Russian forces, the construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) was resumed in 1974, a railway parallel to the Trans-Siberian, running approximately 400 kilometres to the north.

By the end of the 1980s, the considerable Soviet Union military presence in the North Pacific was a reality. During its existence, the USSR maintained the territorial integrity of Asiatic Russia and secured its borders. The territorial dispute between Russia and Japan over the Kuril Islands, and the diplomatic disagreements between Russia and China concerning the border demarcation both remained unsettled, thus preventing a complete normalisation of relations with Japan and China. This will be further discussed in the following chapters.

3.4.1. Economy

At the beginning of the twentieth century Siberia was still an agrarian region. Ninety-nine percent of its imports were industrial items. The situation started to change in the 1920s, however, with the profound socio-economic reforms implemented by the Bolsheviks. Following the Civil War, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced by the government headed by Lenin, revoking the War Communism economic policies. It was *de facto* state capitalism, and market methods were used to rebuild the economy of the country. In the late 1920s, the NEP was abolished and Soviet socio-economic reforms proceeded: the industrialisation of the economy, collectivisation of agriculture and Cultural Revolution. (Naumov, 2006)

The large scale 1930s industrialization aimed for the transformation of agrarian Russia into an industrial nation, and Siberia played an important role in this transformation. This effort required a huge amount of natural resources, and most of these were located in Asiatic Russia. Accordingly, one of the principles of Soviet industrialisation was the development of industry in Siberia and the RFE. Many new enterprises were built in

various regions of Siberia and totally new industries were developed, such as oil refining and the aviation industry. Dozens of new coal mines were constructed, and electric power stations, heavy industry and railway transport were particularly developed. At the same time, Siberia increased its productive capacities and the volumes of production. (Alekseev, 2010:34) In 1917, Siberia's share in industrial production was three percent; in 1939 it accounted for more than ten percent.

The industrialisation process undertaken by the Soviet government occurred when "[…] grain procurement was becoming problematic. And industrialization was perceived as being in danger unless an equally radical restructuring was undertaken in agriculture." (Lewin, 2005:66) As a result, the rural population was collectivised into state farms -in other words, agriculture was industrialised. This had a negative impact on the population, however, as the developing industrial society collided with rural Russia. (Lewin, 2005:67) Collectivisation had less support in Siberia than in European Russia, leading to fierce resistance and massive uprisings in the region. (Naumov, 2006:199)

The Revolution and the Civil War resulted in the de-urbanisation of Siberia and a population decline. Despite this, in the 1920s Siberia's population again increased and de-urbanisation was reversed. The government focused on the development of cities (particularly cities in the interior), and urbanisation became an imperative for the Bolsheviks. Migration from rural areas to cities was either promoted or forced, thus leading to a growth in the number and size of the cities. From 1920 to the outset of the Great Patriotic War (1941),the urban population increased 6.2 percent annually, resulting in one of the fastest urbanisations in world history. (Gaddy, 2003:69) In 1939, the urban population exceeded 30 percent. (Ablazhei, 2010:236) Indeed, in 1939, seven cities exceeded 250,000 inhabitants: Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Perm, Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Ufa and Irkutsk.

The All-Union census of 1926 reported that some13 million people lived in Siberia and the RFE. Growth was a result of both voluntary and forced migration (planned resettlement). "Industrialization, the symbol of Soviet modernization programme, which started in the 1920s and 1930s, had a determining influence on the demographic process." (Ablazhei, 2010:235) By 1939, the population of Asiatic Russia had grown to more than 16 million people.

Forced migration increased sharply in the 1930s. In 1929 the Politburo approved a labour camp system and the use of the labour of criminal prisoners (GULAG). Prison camps were constructed in remote areas in order to colonise and exploit these regions. The implementation of the GULAG system turned Siberia, especially the high north and the north east, into a land of forced labour. The GULAG and its forced labour was an essential tool for Soviet industrialisation during Stalin's government, and it had a substantial impact on the economic development of Asiatic Russia. Major industrial cities such as Vanino Port, Norilsk, Vorkuta, Magadan-Kolyma and the Baikal-Amur Railway became symbols of the GULAG labour force. At its peak (1938), the total GULAG population exceeded two million people. (Gaddy, 2003:84)

The modernisation process in Siberia and in the whole country was disrupted by the Great Patriotic War. At that time, more than one thousand enterprisesand about 300 industries shifted to Siberia, and more than one million people were evacuated from European Russia to Siberia. Similarly, the region provided agricultural and industrial support for the front line.

Militaryindustries shifted to Siberia as well. Indeed, during the war, Asiatic Russia and particularly the Ural region, became the centre of the Soviet Union's war economy which shared about 40 percent of the total war production of the Soviet Union. Large cities such as Novosibirsk, Omsk, and Krasnoyarsk became large centres of defence industry. (Alekseev, 2010:35).

In the second half of the twentieth century, intensive industrialisation continued the rapid transformation of Siberia. New industries such as oil, gas, hydro-power, diamond, military-industrial complexes (including nuclear weapons) became 'the backbone of Russia's economic strength'. With these industries, new Soviet industrial cities emerged, such as Bratsk, Nizhnevartovsk, Ust-Ilimsk, Sayanogorsk, Norilsk, Tynda, and Surgut. "(The Soviets) viewedthe conquest of Siberia- industrialising and urbanising some of the world's most inhospitable territory- as one of the USSR's greatest achievements." (Gaddy, 2003:72)

In the 1960s, the extraction and production of oil and gas boosted north-western Siberia, and the Soviet Union began to develop an extensive energy distribution and pipeline network such as Druzhba, Yamal-Europe, Soyus, Bratsvo and Northern Lights

pipelines in order to deliver oil and gas to European markets. Oil and gas becamethemajor sources of revenue in the USSR. From 1960 to 1986 oil production in the USSR increased 320 percent and gas production by 1,410 percent. (Inozemtsev, 2012)

By the same token, development programmes and industrial megaprojects were carried out, such as the construction of giant hydroelectric power stations, in Angara-Yenisei, Bratsk, Krasnoyarsk, andSayano-Shushenskaya. The Bratsk and Krasnoyarsk hydroelectric power stations combined generated more than 10 million kilowatts of electricity. Indeed, for a long time they remained two of the most powerful hydroelectric power stations in the world. Other industrial enterprises and production complexes were also constructed, such as the world's largest aluminium plant at Sayan, and the coalfields in the Kansk-Achinsk Basin. By 1985, Siberia was the largest energy-producing region of the Soviet Union. (Gaddy, 2003:92) From 1960 to 1984,aluminium production rose 340%, nickel output increased 430 percent and electricity production went up 450 percent. (Inozemtsev, 2012)

Transport was further developed. Existing railways were electrifiedandbranch lines from the Trans-Siberian railway connected key regions of the Soviet Union with the rest of the country, specifically the South Siberian and Tyumen-Nizhnevartovsk railways. The Baikal-Amur Mainline was completed by 1984. Water transport was also developed (river boats, icebreakers).

The agricultural situation remained difficult. Authorities made several attempts to revive agriculture. The first main attempt was Khrushev's Virgin Land Campaign in the mid-1950s; the second attempt was during Brezhnev's government in the 1960s. At first efforts had a positive effect, however, in the long-term they were ineffective. "Thus, notwithstanding the authorities' attention to the problems of agriculture and their persistent efforts to change the situation for the better, it steadily degenerated during the second half of the twentieth century." (Naumov, 2006:209) The farming population decreased, from 87 percent of the total population of Siberia to about 30 percent in 1989.

In Soviet times, the development of education and culture played a central role. Throughout Siberia and the RFE, education and cultural institutions, as well as universities, opened. By 1939, the literacy rate had increased to 85 percent of the population. Education, science and culture continued to develop in the second half of the twentieth century. In

1957, for instance, the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Science was established in Akademgorodok, a special town in the outskirts of Novosibirsk. It became one of the leading research and innovation centres in the USSR. Similarly, Novosibirsk State University emerged as one of the most important universities in the Soviet Union. At the same time, other academic institutions developed in cities such as Vladivostok, Irkutsk, Tomsk, and universities and cultural institutions opened in many cities and towns. Thus, "[…] Siberia and the Far East witnessed the emergence of an urban civilization known for its skilled labor and high level of education and culture." (Valdai, 2012:37)

In the second half of the century, the government focused on the development of cities in Asiatic Russia.More than 1.5 million people resettled from villages to cities during the 1950s. At that time, the urban population almost accounted for more than 50 percent of the population. Cities in Siberia became major urban centres, the fast growing population and industry transformed the former imperial towns or villages into large Soviet cities. In 1959, six cities surpassed 500,000 inhabitants. By 1989, the population of these six cities exceeded one million: Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Omsk, Chelyabinsk, Ufa and Perm. In the same way, other six cities had a population over 500,000: Krasnoyarsk, Barnaul, Khabarovsk, Novokuznetsk, Irkutsk, and Kemerovo. (Ablazhei, 2010:238)

The population of Siberia and the RFE increased from 27.9 million in 1979 to 32.1 in 1989, an increase of 15.1 percent, higher than European Russia (5.3 percent) and the national average (9.3 percent). Similarly, the urban population swelled from 19.5 million in 1979 to 23.5 in 1989.

In spite of the population growth, increasing difficulties were experienced in attracting and retaining the labour force required to undertake the development of that part of the USSR, as the socio-economic situation deteriorated in the 1980s. "Reckless exploitation of natural resources of the East, investments of earning from there to military complexes and food provision to the population, gaps between production and demand, underestimation of vital problems of the people." (Alekseev, 2010:37)The *perestroika* reforms implemented by Gorbachev in an attempt to resuscitate the Soviet economy and to improve the living standards, had proved unsuccessful by 1991.

3.5. Crisis, 1991-2000

Following the dissolution of the USSR, Boris Yeltsin took charge as the first president of the Russian Federation.One of his primary goals was not just to reform the planned Soviet economy, but to establish it once and for all. By the same token, he believed that the Soviet political system had to be overturned.(Desai, 2005) To achieve this end, the government implemented the Gaidar-Chubais "shock therapy" reforms within the Russian Federation. These reforms involved abolishing price controls, the elimination of state subsidies, and the privatisation of state-owned property. The reforms resulted in a dramatic increase in prices and massive hyperinflation, however, socio-economic contrasts among the regions sharpened and millions of Russians were thrown into poverty. (Kholina, 2010) The government did almost nothing to minimise the social impact of the reforms on the most vulnerable groups. Thus, the reforms had a negative effect on the majority of the population; the cost to ordinary people was excessively high and living standards deteriorated. As a result, the popular support for the government in 1991-1993 had eroded almost completely by 1999, when only about 5 percent of the population backed the reforms. (Desai, 2005)

The reforms led the country to a major crisis that the Asian part of Russia 'experienced in full'. (Naumov, 2006:216) The negative effects of the market reforms in the 1990s were much more pronounced in Siberia and the RFE. (Inozemtsev, 2012)Production in many branches of the economy slumped and hundreds of enterprises were closed.

Many industries could not survive in a competitive economy, including the military industry, and those industrial cities in remote and harsh environments. As described above, defence and heavy industries dominated Siberia's economy. The Ural region, for instance, comprised 22 percent of all military complexes in the country. In 1990, 45 percent of working population was engaged in industrial production personnel and 42 percent of the funds were invested in military enterprises. These industries depended critically on related industries in European Russia.In the 1990s, the government drastically reduced its military expenditure, and this decrease affected defence-oriented cities, namely Novosibirsk,

Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk, Komsomolsk-on-Amur. The huge reduction in subsidies and military production led to the closure of many bases.

Excepting oil and gas, other industries were not competitive either. A 1996 study estimated that the food processing, forestry products, light industry, chemicals, agriculture, ferrous metals, coal, forestry and fishing industries could not be competitive at world prices, and would be unprofitable. (Thornton, 2011) In 1998, industrial production stood at only 50 percent of 1990 production. Industries could not satisfy market requirements. Siberia was de facto being de-industrialised.

The region's infrastructure, including roads, railways, and engineering works, rapidly deteriorated. Passenger air service and railroads declined. The economic situation continued deteriorating until the end of the 1990s.

The breakdown of the economic system as well as the economic crises had a negative impact on the development of Siberia. For the first time in its history, Siberia´s population sharply declined and entered a phase of de-urbanisation, along with an increase in crime rates and the deterioration of the health system, causing life expectancy at birth to shrink. Indeed, out-migration to other regions increased and surpassed in-migration for the first time in centuries. "For the most part, Siberia became an unpleasant place to live. From a region in which the population had steadily grown during the course of 400 years, mainly to in-migration from the European part of the country, it became a region from which people began to migrate to other places." (Naumov, 2006:219)

As in the rest of the Russia, regional elites were formed by regional authorities and the new owners of industry. These elites attempted to strengthen their power in the different political entities within the Russian Federation. This is what Igor Naumovcalls 'the parade of sovereignties', when the regional authorities of the Russian Federation attempted to secure exclusive rights and privileges and to make their local legislation superior to federal laws. (Naumov, 2006:193) These regional laws often contradicted or even violated the constitution. The 'parade of sovereignties' was an acute problem that the federal government in the 1990s was unable to combat."Yeltsin's reformers were so successful in ending the old economic and political patterns of state control than Yeltsin began to be concerned over whether the government could exercise its legitimate powers effectively-especially in a country as vast as Russia." (Desai, 2005:91)

In summary, during the last decade of the twentieth century, "The combined impacts of reduced military spending, hyper-inflation, a fierce conflict between central and regional elites for ownership and control of regional assets, and a collapse of the governance saw many territories in Siberia and the Far East descended into near chaos." (Thornton, 2011:13)

3.6. Conclusions

It should be noted that Russia's eastward expansion is not the history of a territorial imperative through which the Russian state attempted at all times to incorporate regions beyond its border. The expansion to the Baltic Sea or to the south should not be compared to that in the east. Similarly, it is important to avoid generalisations across historical periods. The motivation for the initial penetration beyond the Urals was different to that for the Great Northern Expedition or for the annexation of the Amur and Ussuri regions in 1860.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the export of furs motivated and paid for the cost of the expansion into Siberia, and was the main reason behind the enlargement. Concurrently, the state tried to legitimise Siberia as part of the Russian Empire through economic, military, and legal methods. Thus, it was a complex process with two parallel and intertwined trends: the people's and the state's colonisation. (Ablazhei, 2010:230)

In the eighteenth century, security and economic reasons, as well as a lack of knowledge of Siberian and North Pacific geography, caused the government to support the exploration and settlement of Siberia. Under Peter the Great, the government sought new lands, routes and resources to strengthen the Russian Empire and Russian economic, political and military power reached Alaska, California and even Hawaii.

In the nineteenth century, Siberia still was a void in terms of population and power "[…] To St. Petersburg, northeaster Asia was a land of fur and exile, and the outside world accepted this estimate readily enough." (Treadgold, 1947:47) Thus, Russia intended to establish itself firmly in a territorial and political sense in northeast Asia. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Stolypin's reforms and the wave of new settlers were among the most important periods in both Russia's and Siberia's history. Nevertheless, Stolypin

then urged a halt to expansion beyond the Russian frontiers and withdrawal to these frontiers.

Following the creation of the USSR, Siberia underwent rapid changes due to large-scale industrialisation. In the second half of twentieth century, the role of Asiatic Russia gradually increased due to its geopolitical location and the exploitation of natural resources. The Asian part of the Russia became a fortress, a new frontline that insulated itself. "[…] Intensive economic development of Siberia took place only during the past hundred years. The preceding three centuries were a period when the matter of populating and assimilating the region was settled." (Ablazhei, 2010:240)

Historically, Russia's leadership has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The colonisation and further integration of the region with the rest of the country was undertaken selectively, depending on the security-political and economic imperatives of Russia as a whole. In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries, however, Siberia continued to be instrumental. The development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times followed a rationale: the geostrategic principles had a higher priority than the commercial ones. Russia's centre has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The assimilation, development, and further integration of the region with the rest of the country was done selectively, depending on the military-strategic, political, and economic imperatives of the central regions and the country as a whole. (Artemov, 2010:167)

For four centuries, the Tsardom of Muscovy, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have extended eastward; this expansion has brought under their control a huge territory and plenty of natural resources, however, this expansion has also brought multiple security concerns to Russia and has met resistance from regional neighbours, mainly Japan and China. Historically, the main concern in the east was China, and only in the first half of the twentieth century did Japan become its main concern. In Soviet times, the Russian presence in Asia was unprecedented in its intensity, nevertheless, following the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian Federation suffered a severe crisis and began to look for a place for its territory in Asia. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the turning of the country to the west made Russia much less an Asian power.

Russia's conceptualisation of Siberia, and in particular its role in foreign policy in Northeast Asia has always been multifaceted. Internal factors and ideas suggested Russia should become a European, Imperial or Communist state, whereas external ideas and geopolitics forced Russia to reflect all this in its foreign and security policy between Asia and the West. Therefore, the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia often pointed in different directions – territorial expansion, isolation, or integration – at different time.

In Chapter Four this research will examine more deeply why Asiatic Russia is essential to Russia's greatpowerness and to what extent the growing importance in politics and economics of Northeast Asia is an opportunity or a threat to Russia's great power status.

> Siberia has a great future. It is seen only as a vault that contains much gold, many furs, and other goods, but it is cold, covered with snow, poor means of subsistence, not criss-crossed by roads, and thinly populated. This is wrong.
>
> *A. Herzen*

> To leave this region [Siberia] unattended would be a manifestation of prodigious state wastefulness. This region cannot be closed off with a stone wall. The East has awakened gentlemen, and if we do not use these riches, then it will be taken by others, even if only by means of peaceful penetration.
>
> *P. Stolypin*

CHAPTER FOUR

What is Siberia to Russia?

The region historically defined as *Siberia* constitutes most of the historical, cultural, and geographical basis for Russia's greatpowerness and its distinctiveness from the West. Russia as a great power is a central idea of national identity both within the elites and the population. The self-conceptualisation of being a great power has an important role in Russia's domestic policies and external relations. This thesis argues that one of the most important long-term factors influencing Russia's national identity was Russian expansion into Northern Asia with the conquest of Siberia. *Asiatic Russia* is a prime component contributing to national identity as Russia is conceived as a great power between straddling Western and Asian countries.

The internal development and external development of Siberia are conducted by the Russian state under the logic of great power. Indeed, Siberia embodies Russia's great power dilemmas between strategic security concerns and economic opportunities, between international cooperation and national control.

This chapter looks into the internal geopolitics of Asiatic Russia to understand the place of the region in Russia´s national identity and foreign policy making. In a like manner, the chapter examines more deeply the reasons why Asiatic Russia is essential to Russia's great power identity and to what extent the growing importance in politics and economics of Northeast Asia is an opportunity or a threat to Russia's greatpowerness. The

immediate question is: What is Siberia for Russia? This chapter is organised as follows. Firstly (1), it describes Siberia's main features and the position of the region within the new international order. Then (2), it is examined the current economic and security issues of Asiatic Russia, putting emphasis on the opportunities and concerns perceived by the Russian authorities and the leading Russian scholars of international relations. This section divided into four parts: Security, Energy, Economy and the Arctic. Finally (3), this chapter concludes by reflecting upon the connection between Russia's great power identity and the general situation in Russia's eastern provinces.

4.1. Russia in Asia

4.1.1. What is Siberia?

The Russian identity is one of the main issues of the country. The question of Russia and Europe has been widely debated since the early nineteenth century, "[…] it is the background to virtually every discussion about Russia […] it remains alive as an existential question." (Palat, 2010:72) Westernism, Slavophilisms, and Eurasianism constitute attempts to answer to the question of Russia's place in the world, but where is Siberia in this debate? "Siberia has been positioned in the context of the debate about Russia being European or Eurasian: if Russia is European, then, somehow Siberia does not belong in Russia; but if Russia is Eurasian, Siberia seems to be a part of Russia." (Palat, 2010:81)

President Putin and foreign decision makers never call Russia "Eurasian" but a "Euro-Asian country". Putin recognises that Russia is a Euro-Asian country, as the greatest part of its territory is in Asia, but he has never claimed that Russia belongs to a Eurasian civilisation, "[…] stressing that Siberia and the Far East are geographically Asia, and pursuing an active diplomacy in favour of regional integration in the most dynamic part of the world is no more than political common sense." (Laruelle, 2008:8)

At the same time, Putin has insisted that Russia is an inalienable part of Asia and therefore has several interests on it. In a speech in 2000 Putin said that:

> Russia has always felt itself to be a Eurasian (evroaziatskaya) country. We have never forgotten that a greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia. But frankly speaking, we have not always used that advantage. I think the time has come for us and the countries of the Asia-Pacific to go over from words to deeds, that is, to build up economic, political and other contacts. Russia has all the requisite possibilities for this now. (Mezhdunarodnogo Yevraziyskogo Dvizheniya, 2015)

Similarly, in Putin's Russia, "[…] the uniqueness of Russia becomes a source of strategy rather than for obfuscation; and the place of Siberia in Russia is found through Eurasian uniqueness rather than European universality." (Palat, 2010:82) Siberia essentially comprises the 'Eurasian bridge' between East and West promoted by Russia. It could be said that Pragmatic Eurasianism is a strategy to find a place for Siberia.

Currently, the region defined as Asiatic Russia constitutes the historical, cultural, and geographical basis for Russia's status as a great power and its distinctiveness from the West. Under President Putin's administration, Russia has sought to define its national identity as *Eurasian* by connecting the ideas of greatpowerness, multicultural and bi-continental country, and economic integration.

It is often argued by the Russian elites that Russia by virtue of its history and geography, the country was, is, and will be a great power. As a result, Siberia is naturally seen as an asset. From the Russian perspective, the way in which a great power should look like stems mainly from geopolitical elements. One of the country´s most important features is the geographic location. The unique size of Russia's territory and its historical development is a central element in Russia's great power identity. (Leichtova, 2014:22)

Siberia has been part of the Russian Empire since the seventeenth century and ever since then it has been mostly inhabited by Russians. "Siberia is after all overwhelmingly, indeed almost entirely Russian, indeed more so than France is French or England is English." (Palat, 2010:85) There are indeed security issues that threaten Russia's full sovereignty over its Asiatic territory, and they will be further explained in this chapter. Nevertheless, "[…] the world perceives Siberia and the Far East very much as an inalienable part of Russia and takes into consideration its active role as a catalyst of economic growth of that region." (Dash, 2010:143)

Siberia constitutes almost all of North Asia. It encompasses much of the Eurasian landmass, from the Ural Mountains in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Kazakh and Mongolian steppes in the south. Siberia is an enormous land; comprising 13.1 million of square kilometres it is 77 percent of the territory of Russia, 30 percent of the Asiatic landmass and about one tenth of the earth's land surface. If it was an independent country, it would be the world's largest.

From west to east, Siberia is often geographically divided into three regions. West Siberia is the land lying from the Ural Mountains to the Yenisei River, a plain principally drained by the Ob/Irtysh River, and in this soil are most of the known Russian oil and gas reserves. East Siberia is a plateau area that stretches from the Yenisei River to the Lena River. The Russian Far East is the easternmost and biggest region, stretching from the Lena River to the Pacific Ocean, and this region comprises diverse terrain and climates.

Siberia can also be divided into three segments from north to south. The northernmost region is the tundra, lying from the Arctic Ocean to approximately the Arctic Circle. This region is scarcely and sparsely inhabited and mainly linked through the Northern Sea Route across the Arctic Ocean. To the south lies the taiga region, which is on average 1,500 kilometres in width and comprises most of the forest land and fur-bearing animals. The region is linked by systems of rivers. In the south, at around latitude 50° north, is the Eurasian steppe, which extends farther south to the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia. This region has been the historic Eurasian highway; it is where the Trans-Siberian Railway is located and where the majority of the population lives.

Siberia's system of rivers consists of four main rivers and their tributaries: the Ob, the Yenisei, the Lena and the Amur. There are many big rivers and lakes, including Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake, and the largest single repository of fresh water. As has been stated before, the rivers of Siberia have played an essential role in the history of Russia and the region.

Siberia has one of the harshest climates on earth. Winters in Siberia are long and extremely cold; the lowest temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere occur in Siberia, which has the reputation of a 'giant icebox'. (March, 1996:5) It is severely cold because it is geographically isolated from warmer influences of the west, south and east, and open to the intrusion of cold air from the north. Forty percent of Siberia's territory is covered by permafrost (permanently frozen earth), which means that structures must be built on frozen earth.

Asiatic Russia borders with six countries: Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, North Korea, Japan and the United States. According to the Russian Census of 2010, Siberia has a population of approximately 38 million. (ROSSTAT, 2010) The region is divided into three federal districts: the Urals Federal District, the Siberian Federal District, and the Far

Eastern Federal District. The majority of the population consists of ethnic Russians whose descendants came from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Similarly, there are many ethnic minorities, such as the Tatars, Yakuts, Buryats, Nenets, Khanti, Koriaks, Mansi, Chucki, Eskimos, Ulchi, Tuvinians.

Siberia is as rich in resources as it is large in size:

> The conquest of Siberia brought the Russians a sixth of the world's gold and silver, a fifth of its platinum, and a third of its iron. A quarter of the world's timber grows within its boundaries and its supplies of coal, oil, and natural gas are still difficult to estimate […] (Lake Baikal) holds a fifth of the earth's fresh water, and Siberia's navigable rivers are more than long enough to encircle the globe. (Lincoln, 1993:3)

Siberia's watershed is home to one of the largest forests in the world, stretching from the west to the east. Southwest Siberia is a productive agricultural area, rich in oil and coal. The Ob and Yenisei rivers provide abundant hydroelectric power. Deposits of iron and bauxite provide the raw materials for steel and aluminium production. The central Siberian plateau is home to Norilsk Nickel, the world's larger producer of nickel and palladium. The Lena River provides access to gold and diamond mines.

Over 90 percent of the natural resources in the Russian Federation are located in Siberia. Siberia provides Russia with 93 per cent of its total gold production; 83 per cent of its aluminium; 72 per cent of its coal, over 50 per cent of its cellulose, over 90 per cent of the gas, over 70 per cent of the oil, over 95 percent of diamond production; and over 40 per cent of Russia's electrical energy. The Sea of Okhotsk is one of the richest fisheries in the world, and produces over ten percent of the world's fish catch. Lake Baikal holds more than 20 percent of the world's fresh water resources. (Naumov, 2006:221)

Thus, it is in Siberia that the resources and the space that supports, in large part, Russia's claim to great power status, are located. Russia owes its status as a global power to Siberia, which makes Russia more than a 'vast European country'. "Siberia is Russia's backbone and minus Siberia it would be spineless. The leaders know this very well, and therefore would like their country to play a befitting role in that region in the years to come." (Dash, 2010:147) Thus, Siberia plays a key role for Russia; without Siberia, Russia would not be a great power, and what is more, would no longer be Russia.

> […] (S)ince the overwhelming majority of Russia's raw material resources are still to be found in Siberia, the Russian government must inevitably, sooner or later, devote greater attention to its development. Without Siberia and its resource

> potential Russia and its economy would be condemned to a permanently backward place in the dynamically modernizing contemporary world. (Naumov, 2006:221)

4.1.2. Russia's Pivot to Asia

The world political system is undergoing a fundamental transformation, an unprecedented shift of the geographical centre of gravity in international politics and economics from Europe to Asia-Pacific.

> The shift of the world development to the Asia-Pacific region has been the mega trend of the past few decades. Asia-Pacific is becoming the engine of the world civilization – the role that Europe has been playing for the past five centuries. This is happening due to the region's economic upturn and the obvious crisis of the Euro-Atlantic idea of globalization. (CSCAP, 2010)

Asia-Pacific is home to the majority of great powers and it is where most of their interests converge. This region has such a combination of wealth, resources, territory and strategic geography. (Walton, 2007) The region accounts for the bulk of the global GDP and hosts most of the largest economies in the world. At the same time, markets are growing rapidly, particularly in East and Southeast Asia. The demographic growth, the increasingly better qualifications of the workforce, urbanisation, and an increase in living standards, has boosted demand for different kinds of products. East and Southeast Asia are turning from being a "traditional assembly shop" into the biggest and most promising market in the world. (Likhacheva, 2010) The Asia-Pacific region is now often identified as the world's new centre of gravity. (Walton, 2007; Kizekova, 2011) This redistribution of forces gives rise to questions about Russia's place in the world and its role in Asia-Pacific.

Russia is geographically very much part of Asia, two-thirds of its territory is located there, but compared to Europe, Russia's ties with Asian countries are less developed. Russia is considered an economically, politically and culturally distant neighbour. (Akaha, 2009) Russia's presence in Asia in the last two centuries has rested on its military might and its military presence. Siberia was often seen as the backyard and as a bulwark. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Siberia and the Russian Far East underwent a process of de-industrialisation and a deterioration of living standards, and Russia's position in Asia became marginal; Russia practically vanished from Asia during the 1990s. As a

consequence, at the beginning of the twentieth first century some countries within and outside the region do not consider Russia an Asia-Pacific country.

Northeast Asia occupies a special place in the Asia-Pacific geopolitical and economic space, as it is an area where the interests of the largest and most influential Asia-Pacific countries are closely interwoven. (CSCAP, 2010) They are some of the most dynamic economies of the world and Russia shares borders with them.

Russia is trying to integrate itself into the Asia-Pacific region through intensive economic and social development of Siberia and its Far East. NEA countries may provide markets for Siberia's natural resources, and also help Siberia's development. Russia can benefit from the economic growth of this region. Similarly, peace and stability in the region is essential in this endeavour.

After been practically ignored in the 1990s, it seems that an understanding of the importance of the region has arrived, and efforts have been made to develop Siberia and to strengthen ties with Northeast Asian countries. The region's future depends to a great extent on its interaction with NEA countries. As a matter of fact, the development of Siberia is an internal issue for Russia, however, considering the region's geographical position, NEA countries could play a major role in these efforts. Economic development cannot be achieved without strong economic ties with these countries. The integration of Asiatic Russia into NEA is important for the integration of Russia into the wider Asia-Pacific region. (Amirov, 2010)

Economic, political and cultural relations between Russia and Northeast Asian countries are far from strong. Economic links between the countries remain at a low level, which does not match the scale of their economies. Russian trade is still mainly focused on Europe. The European Union accounted for 48 percent of Russia foreign economic trade in 2010, while NEA countries accounted only for 18 percent of Russia's foreign trade. (Valdai, 2012) Similarly, Russia is the least integrated economy in East Asia vis-à-vis the other economies of the region. In fact, for Northeast Asian economies, trade within the region represents more than 50 percent of their global trade. This is relevant because "[…] the region's integration as a whole is progressing faster and more deeply along the economic dimension than any other dimension. In this sense, Russia's limited economic presence in East Asia constrains its integrative role in the region." (Akaha, 2009:15)

Russia has not become an Asian power, it maintains a low profile in the region. "Culturally and civilizationally, Russia is a 'distant neighbour' to most East Asian societies and most Russians are oriented toward Europe." (Akaha, 2009:17) Whereas Siberia is still semi-peripheral for Russia, the country remains a 'European power with large possessions in Asia'. (Valdai, 2012)

Russia believes itself a global power and therefore an Asian power. Correspondingly, it has been trying to upgrade its profile in the region. "Since 1996 (when Primakov became foreign minister) and especially under Putin, Russian diplomacy has become increasingly active, confident, and aimed at reasserting Russian influence in this region, not only politically but economically through such tools as arms and energy exports." (Rangsimaporn, 2009:208) Indeed, a shift towards Asia started under the Putin and Medvedev administrations. During the last decade, Russia has consistently strived to upgrade its capabilities in Asia. The government has repeatedly talked about the necessity of rebalance with the east.

According to a report drawn by the Russian Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific in 2010 (CSCAP) for the Russian government, Russian geopolitical strategy in the twentieth first century should be: "Lean on the West, stabilize the South and go East." The report suggests that the twentieth first century imperatives offer a new view of Russia as a Euro-Pacific country, not just European or Eurasian. (CSCAP, 2010) By the same token, in another report presented by the Valdai Discussion Club in 2012, it is suggested that Russia can become a Euro-Pacific power. "Its natural competitive advantages in this sphere are its physical presence in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, its experience in Asian affairs, its strong military-strategic positions, and, lastly, the huge potential for Siberia and the Russian Far East." (Valdai, 2012:9)

It is often stressed that the new Asian policy is not a change or an alternative to the socio-cultural focus on Europe but "a pragmatic necessity", "an adjustment to current and future world developments". (Valdai, 2012) Karaganov (2010) emphasises that it is not about a Eurasian choice or the identity debates of the past between Westernisers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists. "Russia's partial economic reorientation towards a rising Asia is only natural and indeed is long overdue."

> […] (Russia's shift to Asia) is placed upon the practical pursuit of national interests, not upon Asia as an alternative field of engagement with respect to other poles of

> global power […] (Eurasianism) is not required to justify or explain the Asian Vector of the contemporary Russian foreign and security policy. Russia is part of a larger Western civilization, but the state has been and will remain an Asian power by virtue of its geographical propinquity and the complex interests to which it gives rise. (Nation, 2010:81)

Thus, it seems that for the Russian government and the leading Russian scholars on international relations, Russia's economic and political shift to Asia is not an option but an imperative if it wants to remain a global power. Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev have remarked several times on the necessity of intensive economic and social development in Siberia and the Russian Far East. President Putin has declared that the development of Siberia and the RFE is Russia's priority. Not only do the frequent visits of the President and the Prime Minister to Siberia, the discourses and the number of articles concerning this subject illustrate this growing turn to the east, there are several projects being undertaken by the government such as the APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012, the creation of the Ministry for the Development of the Far East, the ongoing construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome, as well as new pipelines, railways, highways and industries.

Putin used the 2012 APEC summit in Vladivostok as a means to turn assertively to East Asia and to push for development projects in the region. The government spent more than $5 billion dollars in upgrading the city's infrastructure in order to transform it into a 'gateway to Asia'. In Soviet times, Vladivostok was not a gateway but a fortress; it hosted the Soviet Pacific Fleet and remained a closed city until 1992. "A politically, economically and culturally European country, Russia's ambition to shift its foreign policy and trade to Asia and the Pacific is evident through its hosting of the APEC summit in Vladivostok, a city that has only 600,000 residents and is located 9000km from Moscow." (Jiao, 2012)

The ongoing shift of economic and political activities to the East has put Asiatic Russia in the spotlight, Siberia is no longer on the world's periphery but close to one of the centers of the new global order. Thus, for first time in history, Asiatic Russia may serve not as a buffer against invaders but a source of competitiveness. "Siberia was more often a threat. Now it can become an opportunity, as it was for the Russia pioneers who trekked east and for Stolypin's peasants." (Karaganov, 2011a) Similarly, Siberia's abundant natural resources, its proximity to Asian markets and capital, and its strategic location between east

and west can serve as a catalyst for huge economic growth. Siberia's natural advantages could be the basis for creating a "new Asian tiger". (Deripaska, 2012)

There are also big challenges and risks, however. The small and declining population, decaying infrastructure, low living standards in some regions, and poor climate investment, in addition to the huge distances and extreme weather, are factors that could seriously limit the economic growth of the region. What is more, its abundant natural resources could lead the region to become a supplier of raw material for Asia, particularly of China.

Russia has to develop according to the global trend: Asia-Pacific is becoming the new epicentre of the global economy and politics, and Siberia is in the vicinity. It is where Russia is more vulnerable, and has not yet successfully responded to these circumstances. According to Trenin (2012b), Russia must change this situation if it wants to stay "in one piece".

4.2. Siberia: Opportunities and Challenges

Historically, as described in Chapter Three, Russia's centre has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The assimilation, development, and further integration of the region with the rest of the country was done selectively, depending on the military-strategic, political, and economic imperatives of the central regions and the country as a whole. (Artemov, 2010:167) The centre developed a semi-colonial relationship with Siberia, which gradually became the raw material appendage of European Russia.

In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries, however, Siberia continued to be instrumental. "[…] Siberia has always been assimilated as an internal colony of the Russian empire, and later on the Soviet Union. The relation between European and Asiatic Russia in the historical past was always manifested in the form of 'imperial centre-colony' dichotomy." (Ablazhei, 2010:240)

Due to the harsh weather conditions and the remoteness of some places, the cost of living in Siberia has been always considerably higher than in the rest of Russia. People generally were attracted to the region through economic incentives and the expenses were

heavily subsidised by the state. The term *High North* or *Soviet North* was introduced in the 1930s to establish zones of higher wages due to the climate harsh conditions.

After the Great Patriotic War, the development of Siberia followed the military-strategic and economic requirements of the centre, giving absolute priority to the national requirements and interests considered by the ruling elite, while the regional priorities were constantly relegated and disregarded. The USSR pursued a strategy of regional development in the context of the development of the country as a whole, the 'region for the country concept'. Often the region´s resources were not used to solve regional problems or to improve the region's infrastructure but to seal the loopholes of the Soviet economy, thus, limiting the potential of the region. (Artemov, 2010:171)

In the second half of the century the region became more suitable for living. Soviet policies were implemented to suppress economic differences between regions. Government subsidies gradually increased and several incentives were offered to attract new settlers to the region, especially in the High North. (Map 15) After the collapse of the USSR the Soviet-era development policies came to an end. In Soviet times there had been a rationale behind the development of the region, especially the Far North and the Far East. The economic liberalisation changed the situation dramatically: subsidies from the government were drastically reduced and most of the incentives to live in the region were cut. This drastic reduction in subsidies and economics resulted in a significant deterioration of living standards. Similarly, industrial production declined and due to the scarce transportation infrastructure transport costs significantly rose. Under the market economy, some regions became much more profitable than others. Many enterprises, particularly in the North, became unprofitable due to elevated production costs. This resulted in the growth of income disparities among Siberia's regions and between Siberia and the rest of the country.

4.2.1. Security Issues

The crises in Siberia following the demise of the USSR reversed the four-hundred-year trend of eastward migration from European Russia started by the takeover of the Khanate of Sibir by Yermak. This, in the context of the ongoing shift of the world's economic and political centre from Europe to Asia and especially in the context of the rising China,

provokes serious concerns within the Russian elite that in the long term the country could begin to effectively lose sovereignty over its eastern resource-rich and vast territories.

> The Russian Federation became a strong powerful country only after it had annexed and explored its Eastern territories. That is why all the prospects of the loss of economic control over Siberia are to the same as the loss of its sovereignty and independence. Unfortunately, the official statistics of the fundamental socioeconomic indicators over the last 20 years prove the drastic surrender of positions that have been gained by the Russian Federation at the cost of considerable efforts and victims over several centuries, beginning from Ermak's campaign. (Leshchenko, 2010:640)

The main indicator of the standard of living in developed countries is not household income but the condition of the infrastructure. (Kuleshov, 2012) An insufficient infrastructure weakens internal cohesion, and Siberia is poorly connected.

Historically, compared to other parts of Russia, Siberia has always lagged behind in terms of infrastructure. The country has historically paid more attention to exploiting resources than to building infrastructure. Siberian towns were not cultural centres but administrative ones, thus, transport aimed to link the regions with the capital and the European part of the country, but not with each other. Similarly, air passenger traffic remains at a low level due to the high costs. Suffice to say that in 2015 it is still cheaper to fly from Vladivostok to Moscow that from Vladivostok to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski.

Roads are an essential means of communication and Asiatic Russia lacks them. It is often argued that transportation is the root problem of the Russian economy. The Trans-Siberian Railway and the Trans-Siberian highway are the only surface connections between Siberia and European Russia. While pipelines were built to transport oil and gas for export, there is no major highway linking the region. North of the Trans-Siberian Railway or the Baikal-Amur Mainline, there are virtually no roads. Indeed, there are no paved roads to 54 percent of the populated areas. (Valdai, 2012) In fact, there are only three railroad connections with Asia (Naushki, Zabaikalsk and Grodekovo) and there are no federal railways connecting to China (only the M52 and M54 connecting to Mongolia).

The end of Soviet era policies and its catastrophic consequences for the region and a lifting of migration movements resulted in a huge exodus of population. This only accentuated the severe economic and social crisis that led to a further exodus of people from the region. From 1989 to 2012 Siberia's population dropped by 3.57 million.

Russia is the largest state in the world, it occupies more than ten percent of the earth's surface, but it is sparsely populated, especially if we compare it to other global powers such as China, India, the US and European countries. Russia has a population density of nine persons per square kilometre. Asiatic Russia is much less densely populated; its population density is three persons per square kilometre, in contrast to NEA countries that are much more densely populated: South Korea has a population density of 518 persons per square kilometre; Japan 349 persons per square kilometre; China 145 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Historically, Russia has always been a country with low-density population, however, this characteristic was magnified after the dissolution of the USSR when Russia gained 80 percent of the territory of the erstwhile Soviet Union but only half its population.

The demographic situation in Russia gradually deteriorated after the demise of the USSR. According to the last Soviet census in 1989, Russia's population was 147,342,000. The census of 2010 recorded a population of 142,849,472, a four percent decrease in that period. In 2012, for the first time since the collapse of the USSR, Russia's population started to grow. In 2015 the estimated population in Russia was 146,300,000. (ROSSTAT, 2015) It is argued that this growth is only as a temporary pause resulting from births in the perestroika years. (Clover, 2012) The most likely scenario is that the population will remain stable for several years and then will likely start declining again, although Russia's demographic trends remain uncertain in the long term.

The demographic decline is more acute in Siberia. Whereas from 1992 to 2010 the population in Russia decreased 4.4 percent, in Siberia it dwindled 7.4 percent and in the RFE the population slumped 17.4 percent. This had led to the view Siberia as a zone of depopulation and decline.

Siberia is a constellation of diverse geographic spaces, however, and not a single block; patterns are not universal in Siberia and migration is not unidirectional, there is in- and out-migration and a constant movement of people. (Heleniak, 2009) The peak of out-migration was in 1992; this out-migration started in the 1980s. From 1993 out-migration has considerably slowed, Siberia has had only one year (1999) of out-migration, whereas out-migration in the Far North and RFE, although it has slowed has remained consistent. (Heleniak, 2009)

By comparing the last Soviet census (1989) and the two post-Soviet Russian censuses (2002, 2010) certain patterns can be revealed. (See Appendix III)

Most of the federal entities of Western Siberia, Novosibirsk Oblast, Kemerovo Oblast, Omsk Oblast, Kurgan Oblast, Tomsk Oblast, Altai Krai, and Krasnoyarsk Krai, registered a population growth in their regional administrative centres (Tyumen, Tomsk, Kemerovo, Omsk, Novosibirsk (the third most populous city in Russia), Barnaul and Krasnoyarsk respectively). Meanwhile, most of the industrial cities in these regions present a small decline: Novokuznetsk, Prokopyevsk and Leninsk-Kuznetsky in Kemerovo; Rubotsk and Biysk in Altai Krai; and Yeniseysk in Krasnoyarsk Krai. A trend toward centralisation in these regions could be seen, with people moving within the regions from smaller towns to the regional administrative centres. Although the "second echelon" industrial cities registered a population decline, the decrease in most has slowed down considerably in the last ten years. (Valdai, 2012)

The last census showed a significant population growth in the northwest, in the rich oil and gas federal entities: Tyumen Oblast, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. Both the regional administrative centres, Khanty-Mansiysk, Salekhard and Tyumen,and industrial cities such as Nizhnevartovsk and Surgut in Khanty-Mansi; Novy Urengoy, Noyabrsk and Nefteyugansk in Yamalo-Nenets; and Tobolsk in Tyumen registered a population increase.

By contrast, the situation is bleak in the northern cities of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. Apart from Norilsk, most of the cities suffered a dramatic population decline: Turukhansk, Igarka, Dudinka and the northern port Dikson. In all but Dudinka, the population reduced more than 50 percent.

In Irkutsk, Chita, Birobidzhan and Khabarovsk, the regional centres of Irkutsk Oblast, Zabaikalsky Krai, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, and Khabarovsk Krai respectively, the population has dropped by about 10 percent in the last 20 years, although the decline has slowed and almost stopped in recent years. In Blagovechensk, the Amur Oblast's regional centre bordering China, the population increased five percent. The population of industrial cities in these entities registered the same negative trend of population decline as in Western Siberia: Angarsk, Bratsk, Usolye-Sibirskoe, Ust-Ilimsk, Ust-Kut in Irkust Oblast; Belgorosk, Svobodny, Tynda, Skovorodino in Amur Oblast; and

the industrial cities in Khabarovsk Krai: Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Amursk, the ports Sovietskaya Gavan, Vanino and Okhotsk. In all these towns the population has dropped at least 20 percent in the last 20 years. The population of Nerchinsk and Zabaykaslk, the border cities on Zabaykalsky Krai, has remained virtually unaltered.

In contrast, the population has increased in all capitals of Siberian Republic's members of the Russian Federation: Gorno-Altaysk in Altai Republic; Kyzyl in Tuva Republic; Ulan-Ude in the Republic of Buryatia; Abakan in the Khakassia Republic; and Yakutsk in the Sakha Republic. Population in industrial cities of the republics has been gradually declining, however, particularly in the cities of the Sakha Republic: Mirny, Neryungri, Lensk, Aldan and northern cities such as Udachny and Tiksi. In the northern settlements, the decline is substantial, whereas in the southern settlements it is less severe. Thus, in the republics we can see the same trend of intra-regional migration toward the administrative centre.

In Primorsky Krai the situation is better than the neighbouring entities. The decline of the capital, Vladivostok, it is compensated by the growth of Artyom whereas the population in other important cities, Ussuriysk and Nakhodka, remain practically unchanged. Only small towns such as Dalnegorsk, Spassky-Dalny and Partizansk see a negative trend.

In Sakhalin Oblast we can see the same trend of intra-regional migration and regional centralisation that occurs in other regions. Whereas the population of the capital Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk is growing, in other cities such as Okha, Korsakov, Kholmsk, the population has dwindled.

The situation is much bleaker in the mainland regions of the northeast: Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and Kamchatka Krai. In the three regional centres the population has slumped: in Magadan the population dropped from 151,000 to 95,000, in Anadyr from 17,000 to 13,000, and in Petropavlosk-Kamchatskii from 268,000 to 179,000. The decrease of the population in other cities and towns is more drastic, namely: Susuman, Palatka, Seymchan in Magadan Oblast; Providenya, Bilbino, Pevek, Mys Shmidta in Chukotka; Ust-Kamchatsky and Yelizovo in Kamchatka. The extreme cases are Magadan Oblast and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug where 57 and 75 percent of the populations respectively have left the region in the last two decades.

As in many towns of Magadan and Chukotka, towns along the eastern Arctic coastline and river ports connected to it in the north face a real threat of depopulation, with the exception of Dudinka. The population of Dikson in Krasnoyarsk Krai dropped from 4400 to 600; in Tiksi, Sakha Republic, the population decreased from 11000 to 5000; in Chukotka, the population of Pevek diminished from 12000 to 4000, of Provydenya from 5000 to 1900 and in Mys Schmidta the population slumped from 4500 to 400.

Indeed, around 17 percent of the population of the Russian North and RFE has migrated to warmer regions in the last 21 years. By the same token, many small settlements in the north have been completely abandoned and become 'ghost towns', particularly in Magadan Oblast and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug.

The analysis of demographic trends in the last 20 years reveals different patterns of growth and decline thorough Siberia as well as the areas with more acute problems. Although a gradual tendency of population decline is registered in practically all federal entities, the majority register intra-regional migration toward the regional centres, whereas the population of industrial cities has declined, although this decline has considerably slowed in recent years. It could be argued that these regions have integrated more successfully into Russia's, and in some cases into NEA's, economies. On the other hand, there are cases, especially in the north and the RFE where both administrative centres and other cities register a drastic population decline and therefore need immediate support to stop the degradation of social and economic life and therefore the outflow of population. In these regions it could be said that "the viability of society itself has reached crisis point". (Kumo, 2010:2)

The population decrease is disadvantageous for domestic and international reasons. The huge and growing imbalance between a vast resource-rich territory and the size of the population worries the Russian leadership. For economic and geopolitical reasons, the population decline contradicts Russian interests. (Leshchenko, 2010)

What is more, the average per capita income in most of Siberia's regions is lower than the national average, whereas the living costs remain considerably higher. In addition, environmental problems in industrial cities raise serious concerns within the local populations. In terms of healthcare institutions, entertainment facilities, education and culture institutions and research centres, the region lags behind.

The extreme acuteness and complicated character of the situation in the north and some regions of RFE requires urgent measures. The RFE is far and poorly connected to Russia's European core and uncomfortably close to the fast, dynamic NEA countries which lack some of the resources the region has in abundance. "In broader geopolitical terms, Moscow's authority continues to rest mainly on its political-military presence in the RFE-its industrial financial footprint in that part of the world is essentially insignificant." (Lee, 2012) The government admits that the situation in the RFE is one of the most acute problems the country is facing. Putin has described it as a "threat to Russia's national security" and that if concrete measures are not taken, "the very existence of this region for Russia is questionable". (Rangsimaporn, 2009) Similarly, Medvedev stated that if Russia failed to develop the Russian Far East, it could lose it. (Borodaevskiy, 2011)

4.2.2. Energy Issues

Raw materials, most of them hydrocarbon resources, make up the greater part of Russian exports. Indeed, oil and natural gas exports accounted for 68 percent of the total export revenues of Russia in 2013. Crude oil accounted for 33 percent of Russia's total exports, 21 percent petroleum products, and 14 percent natural gas. (Data from EIA, 2014b) Thus, Russia's position in the world cannot be described without reference to the energy dimension. Russia's hydrocarbon resources are not a mere economic asset but a strategic one, the energy sector is vital for Russia. "As viewed by Vladimir Putin, the role of the energy sector is to work with the state to promote international economic expansion and to reinforce the sovereignty and independence that were undermined during the 1990s." (Tsygankov, 2010b:46) The production of oil and gas has been the driving force of Russia's economic growth since the demise of the USSR.

Nowadays, Russia plays a leading role in the world's energy supply: it is the world's second biggest producer of oil and gas. Similarly, it has the world's largest natural gas reserves and eight of the world's largest crude oil reserves. Oil and gas resources account for more than 70 percent of Russian exports and about 50 percent of the total state revenues. About 90 percent of Russia's energy resources are located in Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic. Asiatic Russia contains more than 10 percent of the world's proven oil

reserves and about 30 percent of the world's gas reserves. (Korzhubayev, 2009) The region accounts for 70 percent of Russia's total oil crude production and 95 percent of the country's gas production. Most of these resources are located in West Siberia which "[…] is Russia's main oil and gas producing region. Including the shelf, this region contains over 60% of Russia's ultimate potential hydrocarbon resources of the country's crude and 90% of its gas." (Korzhubayev, 2009:14)

According to the International Energy Statistics, Russian oil reserves are estimated at 80 billion barrels; however, there is no official information because it is classified as state secret information. (Grama, 2012) It is said that there is oil volume enough to maintain the current extraction level for 25 to 40 years. (Yurlov, 2010:135) Russia has developed trunk lines and pipelines of crude distribution networks mainly to Europe. In fact, about 80 percent of oil exports are destined for Europe. In 2014 the main export destinations of Russian oil by country were: Netherlands (19%), China (14%), Belarus (10%), Italy (9%), Germany (8%), Poland (8%), South Korea (6%), and Japan (4%). (Data from CEIC, 2015)

The biggest oil bearing regions in Russia are: Western Siberia, the Volga-Ural region, Northwest, and East Siberia and the RFE. West Siberia produces about 70 percent of the country's crude, indeed, 74 percent of Russia's proven reserves are located there, mainly in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. (Korzhubayev, 2009) The most important oil fields are Samotlor, Priobskoye, Ust-Balyk and Salym. Pipelines transfer oil from this region to different parts of Russia and for export to Europe and to a lesser extent to the east. Following the Great Patriotic War the Volga-Ural region became the largest oil production area in the USSR, however, since the 1970s production has gradually decreased. The Timan-Pechora Basin in the Northwest is the third biggest oil producing region of Russia and has great potential for development, especially off-shore fields in the Barents Sea. Oil production in East Siberia and the RFE remains low, however they are prospective oil regions and have very strong potential for development.

The Russian energy strategy is to rise to and maintain production of 500 million tons up to the mid-century. It is expected that oil production from West Siberia and the Volga Basin will gradually decrease, whereas production in East Siberia and the RFE is expected to increase from about 3 percent of the country's oil production in 2008 to 15

percent by 2022. Similarly, it is expected that the share of oil export to Asia will increase from 8 percent in 2008 to around 25 percent by 2030.

Accordingly, one of Russia's priorities is to increase oil production in East Siberia and the RFE. In 2003 Russia and China signed an agreement to construct the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline (ESPO). (Map 12) This is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in post-Soviet Russia. The pipeline runs from Taishet, Irkutsk Oblast, to Skovorodino, Amur Oblast, in East Siberia. A branch connecting it to the Chinese city of Daqing was completed in 2010. In 2012, Russia brought into service a second section of the ESPO (ESPO-2), from Skovorodino to the Russian port of Kozmino at the Pacific Ocean, near Vladivostok. ESPO is mainly oriented to supply oil to China, Japan, South Korea as well as the US and Southeast Asian countries. Production is said to have increase from 15.6 million tons in 2012 to 30 million tons in 2015. (Rousseau, 2013) The main contributor of oil to the pipeline is the Vankor field located north of the Arctic Circle, Krasnoyarsk Krai. Indeed, Vankor, which started production in 2009, is said to be the largest oil field discovery in Russia in recent decades. In 2013 Rosneft announced an investment of $83 billion to develop this strategic field over the next decade. (Daly, 2014) There are a number of other prospective oil fields in the region, including Verkhnechonskoe, and Yurubcheno-Tokhomskoe. Similarly, important offshore oil fields to the north of Sakhalin have been developed under the Sakhalin-I and Sakhalin-II projects, including the trans-Sakhalin pipeline, an oil terminal in the south, and the De Kastri oil terminal in Khabarovsk Krai which serves as a hub for deliveries to Northeast Asia.

Natural gas production is another strategic asset for the Russian Federation. Russia's total natural gas reserves are estimated at 165 trillion cubic meters, for Russia natural gas 'is practically an inexhaustible source of energy'. (Sevastyanov, 2012) The majority of the gas reserves and fields are located in Asiatic Russia, most of them in West Siberia in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug and Tyumen Oblast. The largest gas fields are Urengoy, Yamburg, Zapolyarnoe, Kharasavey, and Bovanenko. (Grama, 2012) There are also important gas fields in the Arctic, East Siberia and the RFR, most of them still to be exploited.

In 2014, 50 percent of Russia's natural gas exports were destined to Europe, 35 percent to CIS countries, and 15 percent to Turkey. Liquefied natural gas from the RFE was

mainly exported to Japan and South Korea. According to the Energy Strategy of Russia, natural gas production is expected to increase from 691 billion cubic meters to 890 billion cubic meters by 2020 and to 910 billion cubic meters by 2030. (Grama, 2012)

Although 70 percent of Russia's gas production is consumed by the home market, gas has been historically oriented for export to Europe through pipelines. Russia has decided to diversify its exports to Asia-Pacific countries, however. In 2012 exports of natural gas to Asia accounted for only 6 percent of Russia's total gas exports. According to its energy strategy, Russia should increase the Asian share of its gas exports to 30 percent by 2020; this is about 65 billion cubic meters. (Sevastyanov, 2011) Consequently, Russia believes the development of new major fields in the Yamal Peninsula, East Siberia and the RFE to be crucial.

In 2007 the Gazprom Eastern Gas Programme was approved, which comprises the basis for developing the gas industry in Eastern Russia. (Gazprom, 2015) This programme aims to discover new fields and exploit existing fields for home supply, taking into account potential gas exports to China and other Asia-Pacific countries. Currently the region's reserves exceed five trillion cubic meters but according to Gazprom the total reserves could be more than fifty trillion cubic meters. So far four gas fields and gas production centres are being developed in East Siberia and the RFE: in the north of the Irkustk region, Kovyktinskoye field; in the south of Sakha Republic, Chayandinskoye field; in Sakhalin, Sakhalin-II and Sakhalin-III projects; and in Kamchatka, Kshukskoye and Nizhne-Kvakchikskoye fields. (Gazprom, 2015) In East Siberia production has started recently, and exports are to begin in 2017. (Map 11) Oil and gas is produced in Sakhalin as the Sakhalin-I and Sakhalin-II projects and exploration has started under Sakhalin-III. The Sakhalin-II project includes the first liquefied natural gas plant in Russia (LNG). The new developments resulted in a plan to launch several trunk gas pipelines, including the 'Power of Siberia' gas pipeline to convey gas from Irkutsk and Sakha Republic to the RFE and China which is planned to be complete by 2017. It will run alongside the existing ESPO from Taishet to Daqing, China, and to Nakhodka at the Pacific. The pipeline will be connected in Khabarovsk to the Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok pipeline which was brought into production in 2011 to supply the most populated areas and the industrial complex. The Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok pipeline is to feed an LNG plant in

Vladivostok that is yet to be constructed. Indeed, one of Russia's main targets is to increase the volume of its LNG exports. Currently Russia has only one LNG plant producing 10 mpta (2014) destined mainly for Japan and South Korea. Russia is aiming to increase the volume of LNG exports to 30 mpta by 2020 by developing four additional projects: Sakhalin-II expansion, Far East LNG, Vladivostok LNG, and Yamal LNG. (Map 13)

East Siberia and the RFE are prospective regions for centres of the oil and gas industry. According to the Valdai Analytical Report (2012) the Eastern Gas Programme and the ESPO may help to create a third cluster of territorial and production complexes, in addition to the Trans-Siberian and BAM clusters. It may also lead to the development of a greater area in the north and south and lead to industry and infrastructure projects, such as the railroad to Yakutsk, to be completed by 2017. Similarly, the Sakhalin gas supplies going west will intersect with the supplies going east from the Sakha Republic in Komsomolsk-on-Amur. This may lead to the development of those cities and could serve as a growth engine in the area. All this could change the economic situation in East Siberia and the RFE to an important extent. (Valdai, 2012)

Russia's dependency on the exploitation and export of gas and oil has gradually increased in the last twenty years. The role of energy resources, especially in the east, should not be downplayed. "It is something of a common place to say that Russia's attention to its oil and gas sector is blown out of production, however, […] the oil and gas projects that are carried out in areas west of Lake Baikal and in the Far East, particularly in areas that were not developed in Soviet times, act as the main growth engine there." (Valdai, 2012:42) Thus, whereas it is generally agreed within the Russian leadership and by leading scholars that the export of hydrocarbons is crucial to Russia's Asian strategy, there is also a consensus that it cannot be the main part of the strategy. It is not a panacea for developing Siberia, and should be taken as a key strategic asset that can finance projects of development, however, it depends to a large extent on the ability of the country as a whole to diversify its economy in order to reduce its dependency on the energy sector.

4.2.3. Economy

The industrial development of Siberia took place within the framework of a socioeconomic

system that had undergone radical changes and been partially destroyed. The transition from a Soviet, centrally planned economy to a market economy had a negative impact on Siberia. According to Vladimir Portyakov, "following the liberal reforms in the 1990s the government practically abandoned the region, and thus, Siberia and the RFE practically had to survive by their own". (Interview 2)

Historically, Russia's leadership has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The colonisation and further integration of the region with the rest of the country was undertaken selectively, depending on the security-political and economic imperatives of Russia as a whole. European Russia has developed a semi-colonial relationship with Siberia which gradually became its raw material appendage. In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries, however, Siberia continued to be instrumental.

The industrial development of Siberia in Soviet times took place within the framework of a socioeconomic system that had undergone radical changes and had been partially destroyed. The Soviet economic system was built on non-market foundations. From this follows the question, is the current crisis a result of an objectively erroneous vector of Soviet development? Moreover, is Siberia, and especially the north, a place for permanent settlement or should it be developed by means of temporary labour with a minimum number of permanent residents? (Egorov, 2006).

Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy in their book, *Siberian Curse*, criticise the Soviet strategy of regional development. According to them, the USSR forced people to rapidly colonise, urbanise, and industrialise, thus, burdening the country with the costs of transportation over a vast region and of keeping the population warm in environments of extreme cold. (Gaddy, 2003:3) Siberia is not *per se* the liability, but where people are located and the manner of exploiting the region. The authors claim that the costs of inhabiting and exploiting it are disproportionate, and people live in places which should not be inhabited at all. This line of argument could be seen as a re-emergence of the fundamentals of the Cold War debate: "Soviet central planning got it all wrong, the market would have got it right, as it has in the West, and it is time to correct the mistakes of the twentieth century." (Palat, 2009:6)

The argument of Gaddy and Hill provoked harsh criticism from Russian scholars. The assertion that the Soviet industrialisation and development strategy for Siberia was a "monumental mistake" is heavily criticised.

In the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the necessity for a special approach to the development of the Asian part of Russia was clear if people where to be attracted to live in the region. Likewise, no expenses were spared in developing infrastructure such as the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway or the Baikal-Amur Mainline. As we explained in Chapter Three, the key principles that catalysed the development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times were: the development of productive forces, the development of facilities and infrastructure, the predominance of geostrategic goals over commercial ones and the conjunction of economic, military, social and other interests in the implementation of large projects. (Zausaev, 2012)

Indeed, it could be said that the start of the outflow of population commenced as a result of the liberal reforms in the 1990s. Do market transformations and the market economy itself rejects the key principles that catalysed the development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times? Under which principles are the measures to reverse the current negative trends in the region to be taken?

The development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times followed a rationale: the geostrategic principles had a higher priority than the commercial ones. (Zausaev, 2012) Now, what is the rationale for developing Siberia? Are geostrategic principles still more important than commercial principles? What is the role of the state? What is the model for the development of Asiatic Russia?

The abdication of the state in the 1990s resulted in a deterioration of life in the region. Proposed measures for reversing current trends are, for instance: increasing northern bonuses paid by the government, increased availability of housing with considerable government support, spending for utilities should be compensated, free higher education and medical care, dealing with remoteness and isolation by increasing connectedness within the region and with European Russia. "Siberia's and the Far East's existence is only possible on the basis of a strong state program of social demographic development." (Leshchenko, 2010:643) Nevertheless, the question is whether these measures can be implemented within the current economic paradigm. Indeed, "For its

development, Siberia needs a socially, economically, geographically, and geopolitically justified policy of modernization, renewal and revival." (Leshchenko, 2010:643)

The gloomy situation of the 1990s in Asiatic Russia threatened national security. Following the liberalisation of the 1990s, the Russian government, headed by Putin, has pursued state-managed development and state-managed integration to regain control over its eastern provinces. The government formed regional *okrugs* headed by the president's plenipotentiaries. In addition, the territory of Russia was divided into eight federal districts (three in Siberia: the Urals Federal District, Siberian Federal District, and the Far Eastern Federal District) in order to ensure the compliance of federal subjects with federal law. Each district is headed by a plenipotentiary envoy appointed by the President of the Russian Federation.

In the last decade the government, in order to reassert its influence in the region, pursued a strategy of developing major state-funded industrial and infrastructure projects designed to boost the economy, strengthening control over foreign trade and external relations. (Lukin, 2011) The Eastern Gas Programme, the Amur-Yakutsk Mainline (AYAM), the Vostochny Cosmodrome, and the infrastructure developments for Vladivostok APEC Summit 2012, among other infrastructure and industrial projects, embody Russia's efforts towards the development of the region in recent years. Rather than being part of a comprehensive strategy, however, it seems they were isolated efforts to improve the situation. In other words, the government addressed the situation and started doing something; however, it was not clear on what to do or how to do it. It seems there was no rationale, no model, no paradigm for development as there was for the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

In December 2012, in his annual address to the Federal Assembly, President Putin established the development of Siberia and the Far East as a national priority for the whole twentieth first century. (Interview 5) A new approach to Siberia, and in particular to the Russian Far East, began in 2012 following the return of Putin to power. The Ministry for the development of the Russian Far East was created in May 2012 in Khabarovsk, and V. Ishayev was appointed minister. In charge of the social and economic development of the region, the ministry produced a new state programme for its development, the Socio-Economic Development of the Russian Far East and the Baikal Region. The new approach,

unlike that of the Soviet which was based on state subsidies, was based on the construction by the state of large infrastructure projects and other big state undertakings. According to Vladivostok scholar Sergei Sevastyanov, Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU): "The government expected these projects to have collateral effects on the development of the region." (Interview 14) Nevertheless, as Igor Makarov from Moscow Higher School of Economics notes: "It was very ambitious plan, it suggested spending huge amounts of federal money, trillions, with huge government investments, it was super ambitious because even then Russia did not have that money." (Interview 5) Arguably, the government recognised the unfeasibility of this new approach and decided to change the Minister for the Development of the Russian Far East, and A. Galushka took over as the new minister in 2013. The government then elaborated a new model for the development of the RFE, a model based on the development of export-oriented industries, oriented primarily to the Asia-Pacific region. Those industries are expected to take into account the demands of Asia-Pacific countries, particularly China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. In the words of Moscow scholar:

> Our approach is that Russia, while planning the development of the RFE should be based not on our ambitions but on our requirements, because yes, in Russia we want always to produce rockets not extract oil, we are a very ambitious country and we really want to produce high-tech and to sell it to all the world. The reality is that China, Korea, and Japan, they have insignificant demand of high-tech and they are not met by Russia, but they have a very strong and sustained demand for some resource-intensive products to which they have problems to access. (Interview 5)

This new model has three pillars. The first is resource-based industry oriented to Asia-Pacific markets, and particularly NEA countries. The second is the development Territories of Rapid Development (TRD), a sort of Economic Especial Zones (EEZ). The third is state support for private investment projects in resource-industries. (Interview 5)

The main idea behind this model is that Russia has to find new sources of economic growth in its eastern regions and move from the actual model of oil and gas extraction. Still, the region's main asset is its resources. Makarov emphasises that "Natural resources are capital resources and we should use them." (Interview 5) Siberia and the Russian Far East accounts for 10 percent of the proven oil reserves, 25 percent of the world's gas reserves, 12 percent of coal, 9 percent of gold, 7 percent of platinum, 9 percent of lead, 5 percent of iron ore, 21 percent of nickel. Similarly, 16 percent of the world's fresh water,

21 percent of world's forests, and 22 percent of the arable land in the world is in Siberia and the RFE. (Valdai, 2014) The new model will look for new niches more appropriate to Russia's opportunities, particularly different intensive-resource industries and not merely the export of raw materials.

Similarly, TRD are to be created in order to develop different industries based on foreign capital, including high-tech industries. According to Prime Minister Medvedev, these territories should boost Russia's high-tech potential. He said: "It could be anything that develops our technological potential." (TASS, 2014) To attract this capital, the regulations within these TRD should be established taking into account the state of regulations in analogous territories in Asia-Pacific. "The idea is to provide the best tax and administrative regimes in the whole region, better than in other EEZ of East Asia." (Interview 5) In April 2014, the Ministry for the Development of the Russian Far East introduced a bill for creating territories of rapid development in the region. Accordingly, the first such territories are to be realised in the framework of the major cities of the region. It was said that TRD will appear in the whole RFE, and in the different regions more than 400 sites were examined and 23 were selected as primary sites. (Credinform, 2014)

Support remains crucial for developing a resource-intensive and high-industry state. Under the circumstances, the state should choose and support investment projects by potential investors. Furthermore, state support should focus on the development of infrastructure. As Makarov indicates: "The main difficulty and the reason why these projects cannot be realized without state support is the lack of infrastructure in the region. The state support should be oriented to the development of infrastructure." (Interview 5)

In the context of the rising economies of Northeast Asia and the resources available in Asiatic Russia, it seems imperative for the country to re-evaluate its economic ties with neighbouring countries based on the new competitive advantages. Indeed, several analyses note that Russia and Siberia can create new economic niches in addition to the traditional ones (raw materials, weapon sales, nuclear energy and space industry) by addressing problems such as shortages of land, food, water and other resources in Asia. (Likhacheva, 2010; CSCAP, 2010; Barabanov, 2012; Valdai, 2012; Valdai, 2014)

According to these analyses, despite the rapid increase and dynamism of Asian economies, their economic growth has fundamental restrictions due to the lack and

exhaustion of resources. In the twenty first century, when talking about natural resources, nations have to take into account three variables: climate change, shortages of fresh water and deficits of food. (Likhacheva, 2010) This offers the potential for the development of water-intensive industries; the abundance of water in Siberia makes industries requiring much water consumption less costly. Russia could offer its own water resources, instead of just trading water as crude oil or gas, which is complicated and inefficient, focusing on the market for virtual water by exporting water-intensive products to countries where it is more expensive. (Valdai, 2012)

Asiatic Russia may be considered one of the last agricultural virgin lands of the world; more than 30 million of hectares of land worthy of agriculture are misused. According to the Valdai Analysis, no other country has this potential for agricultural development. "[…] a country's ability to procure foodstuffs for its own population and to have surplus of exports is turning into a serious competitive advantage. It strengthens the country's international position and offers a lever for influencing the global economic and political situation." (Likhacheva, 2010) Areas with the potential for further agricultural development are the Altai Territory, southern Krasnoyarsk, Khakassia Republic, south of Chita region, the southern part of Amur Oblast, the lowlands of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, the central part of Sakha Republic and the southwest of Primorsky Krai. Development of these areas could make Russia a commercially viable producer of wheat and fodder for the region, and establish poultry meat and pork industries. (Valdai, 2012)

Timber processing and pulp and paper industries are major consumers of water. Russia possesses 23 percent of the world's forest resources, and in fact, the Siberian forest is larger than the Amazon rainforest. Thus, Russia could export not only raw timber or low-quality processed products but quality products such as high quality paper. (Valdai, 2012)

Igor Makarov estimates that there is a broad consensus within the Russian elite that the country's strategy to develop Siberia cannot focus only on processing raw materials, but must focus on the development of other industries (especially those that are agriculture and water intensive), infrastructure and high technology clusters. (Interview 5) Such a strategy does not exclude the development of traditional niches, namely the export of hydrocarbon resources, space technologies, nuclear power, aircraft building, arms, and manufacturing.

The development of these industries will remain crucial. On these grounds, the government has begun to develop a model for the socio-economic development of Siberia and the RFE.

Under the prevailing circumstances, it is not clear how Russian should move from resource-extracting industry only, primarily oil and gas, to intensive-resource industries. Furthermore, it is not clear how the government pretends to address the acute demographic situation, particularly in the north and the east, or what role the state should play. According to Leshchenko (2010:642) "Elaborating a program of economic revival and the demographic revival of Siberia that relies on the postulates of the open market is not likely to succeed, because such a program cannot become highly profitable." According to Zausaev (2012) special measures should be taken to improve rapidly and constantly the living standards such as: free taxing, special housing policies, special credits, all these measures cannot be implemented under the open market paradigm, however. Melnikova (2006) believes the Russian economy cannot work under strictly liberal conditions without state structures which regulate it. Accordingly, the state should play a central role in the economic development of Siberia.

Thus, what is the best model for Russia's development and what role does state, businesses and citizens play in that development? (Trenin, 2012a) So far the answer is not clear. Unlike in the last three centuries, it seems the Russia does not have a clear model for the development of Asiatic Russia.

Vladivostok scholar Sergei Sevastyanov argues that in recent years "the government is paying more attention to its eastern part", and it is generally accepted that the government is "doing something" although it is not enough. "The government is doing something; the problem seems to be that it does not know what to do. It just implements policies and hopes it will bring some results." (Interview 14) According to Igor Makarov: "It could be argued that Putin himself is committed to the development of the region and the creation of the Ministry for the Development of the Far East under his presidency seems to corroborate this fact." (Interview 5)

It is not clear, however, what the role of the state should be in the development of the region, there is no consensus on whether it should be mainly state sponsored or based merely on market foundations. Nonetheless, the problem lies not only in the fact that the government does not have a clear model for the development of the region, but also with

the attitudes of the Russian leadership. It is argued that the continuing Eurocentric worldview of the elite hinders Russia's development plans. Vladimir Portyakov observes that not only that the Russian leadership and all vice-prime ministers, they are classical liberals, "but their personal position plays an important role, no matter what they say, their heart and soul are not in Asia but in Europe." (Interview 2) Similarly, Igor Makarov believes that the Eurocentrism of the leadership is a big obstacle for Russia's turn to Asia:

> Among the Russian intellectual elite, the majority belongs to those people who are still European oriented. We always point out that this shift (to Asia) is not civilizational but economical, but many people are still afraid that Russia would turn to Asia in terms of political system, civilizational ties. Specially the liberal part of the society, which is the core of the economic group of the Russian government and Russia experts, and they are still very influential, and they still want to collaborate primary with Europe and to some extent with the US, but not with Asia. (Interview 5)

This Eurocentric view is reflected in the country's economic policy. For instance, in 2011, Russia's exports totaled 516 billion dollars with at least 350 coming from Siberia. However, customs statistics indicate that Siberia provides for only 5.97 per cent of Russian exports since most companies are based in Moscow. (Inozemtsev, 2012)

It seems imperative for the government to gradually change this redistribution and taxes for the extraction or the gas and oil export duty should be divided equally between federal and regional budgets, for instance, with mineral extraction's taxes paid to the federal budgets. It is estimated that these measure could give Asiatic Russia at least an additional 2 trillion rubles. (Inozemtsev, 2012) This shows how the semi-colonial legacy persists. Efficient development of Siberia requires "legislative and administrative changes as well as fiscal and political decentralization." (Thornton, 2011)

According to Inozemtsev (2012) "Siberia must have a strong source of funding for development, which can only be achieved through redistributing revenue from the sale of raw materials." These funds could be invested in infrastructure projects and social projects in order to transform Siberia into a more attractive place to live. According to Thornton, the question is: "How should Siberia's resources and people be linked with domestic and global markets? How can Russia achieve flexible and efficient structural change when resources are owned and managed by a government centered in European Russia while administration is delegated to subnational authorities in Russia's remote provinces?" (Thornton, 2011) It seems that Siberia is still seen by a section of the Russian elite as an

outpost. Thus, basically, so far the semi-colonial approach continues and the region is exploited primarily for the economic development of the centre.

Russia is interested in Asia for the potential to export natural resources, create new niches, find new markets, attract foreign investment, and strengthen political and social ties with their neighbours, all this with the aim of developing Siberia, raising the living standard, and reasserting its sovereignty over the region. For this, Russia has to address the imbalance, and rebalance toward the east. One of the priorities is to finally stop the outflow of population and to develop an integral model of regional development. There are several internal socio-economic factors that hamper the implementation of this model.

As has been said, the development of Siberia is Russia's internal affair, but due to the region's geopolitical situation, Northeast Asian countries- read China, Japan and South Korea- may play a preeminent role in the region's development, particularly under the export-oriented model. Nevertheless, "due to the geopolitical situation, Russia has always been very careful about the way that external relations of the RFE are conducted. Complete liberalization may result in loss of sovereignty but isolation may perpetuate the backwardness of the region." (Lukin, 2011:193) Thus, there is a growing tension between economic opportunities and security threats. This thesis will further discuss it in the second part of this work.

4.2.3. The Arctic

The Arctic Ocean was of little relevance in international politics until the Second World War, when its importance as a line for maritime communication was revealed. During the Cold War, the strategic significance of the Arctic grew as it reached an unprecedented level of militarisation -the Arctic was "the main theatre of strategic confrontation", and thus, the development of the Arctic was subordinated to the military-strategic objectives. (Baev, 2009)

In the 1990s the region apparently lost its strategic significance, but at the beginning of the twenty first century, it seems the Arctic is no longer a 'political backwater of international relations'. (Zysk, 2010) The recent retreat of the ice in the Arctic Ocean has brought international attention back to the area. Ice levels have shrunk considerably in

recent decades, especially in the last ten years when it has retreated to a record low. Although the ice is not retreating in a predictable way, climate models predict that the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free in summer sometime between 2030 and 2050. (Oskin, 2013) Apart from the obvious effects on the local and global environment, this unlocks a wide range of both opportunities and security challenges:

> Over the past several years, change in the Arctic has been the source of both excitement and alarm. The opening of Canada's Northwest Passage and Russia's Northern Sea Route led to predictions of shortened trade routes- saving thousands of miles and many days at sea- between Europe and the Far East. Forecasts of large- if as-yet undiscovered- oil and gas reserves have given rise to concerns over sovereignty, security and sustainability throughout the region. (Antrim, 2010)

According to the US Geological Survey (2008), the Arctic could be home to 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil and 30 percent of the undiscovered gas, more than 80 percent located offshore, (Geology.com, 2015) in addition to abundant metal and non-ferrous deposits of copper, zinc, diamond, gold, silver and nickel and the fishing resources.

Similarly, the retreating of the ice opens accessible new strategic sea lanes: the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route (NSR). These routes would shorten distances and may lower shipping costs.

The growing economic interest and strategic significance of the Arctic brings security concerns that have led some academics and politicians to argue that the Arctic is being "re-geopoliticised" and is likely to become a geopolitical hotspot in the decades to come. (Wilson, 2009; Prasad, 2012) Speculations of possible conflicts were triggered in 2007 by the Russian expedition *Arktika* which made the first descent to the ocean bottom below the North Pole and planted a titanium Russian flag on the seabed at 4,261 meters deep.

In the last decade circumpolar states have generally assigned more strategic significance to the Arctic. The Arctic Council, established in 1996, is the intergovernmental forum for addressing issues related to the Arctic. The Arctic Council defines itself as:

> "[…] high level intergovernmental forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic." (The Arctic Council, 2015)

The council has eight members, the five countries bordering the Arctic Sea, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States, and the three countries with territory above the Arctic Circle, Finland, Iceland and Sweden. At first the Council was regarded as a coordination of environmental issues and research; however, in the last decade the relevance of the Council has been strengthened and now it addresses several other issues. Suffice to say that the 2013 Council meeting in Kurina was attended for the first time by top diplomats from Russia and the US: the Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergei Lavrov, and the US Secretary of State, John Kerry.

Russia is a key Arctic player. It is not only the largest circumpolar state and possesses the longest Arctic shore line, but it is also the nation that apparently has the highest ambitions in the region. "Russia has substantial reasons to seek a leading role in the Arctic. It has important economic, social, environmental, and military-strategic interests in the region." (Lassin, 2014b:7)

The Arctic coast of Russia stretches across 7,000 kilometres from Russia's border with Norway on the Kola Peninsula, eastward to the Bering Strait. Russia's Arctic coast runs eastward from the Barents Sea in the west to the Kara Sea, the Laptev Sea, the East Siberian Sea, and the Chukchi Sea. Of these seas, only the Barents is largely ice-free throughout the year.

Historically, the inaccessibility of the Arctic constituted a northern wall that enclosed Russia and impeded it from becoming a maritime power, (Antrim, 2010) and thus, the region had little relevance for the Russian Empire. The Arctic began to play an important role for Russia only in the first half of the twenty century when the Soviet Union began to explore and set up permanent stations and villages in order to exercise sovereignty. As a matter of fact, in 1926 the Soviet Union claimed the whole territory between the North Pole and its eastern and western extremes of its northern coast, the Bering Strait and the Kola Peninsula respectively. During Soviet industrialisation the resources located in the Soviet north began to play a central role in the Soviet centrally planned economy. A major industrial base was created, as well as a transport infrastructure.

During the Cold War the strategic importance of the Soviet North grew due to its proximity to the US. It was a focal point of the Cold War due to the high concentration of Soviet nuclear forces as well as the presence of the Northern Fleet; the Arctic was the

USSR's 'strategic bastion'. Thus, the region remained highly militarised and practically closed until the 1990s.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the region apparently lost its importance for Russia; the policies of the country to the north focused on measures only to respond to the economic and social crisis originating from the demise of the USSR. Indeed, the Arctic was not a priority until the 2000s when it gradually regained its strategic importance for Russia.

Russia is gradually turning to the north through its policies and strategies. The government refers to the Arctic as an area of strategic national interest and constantly emphasises the importance of the region. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said that "The Arctic is a Russian Mecca." (Sputnik News, 2015a) After Norway, Russia was second Arctic country to formulate an Arctic strategy. In 2008 the Russian Federation's Security Council set out the basic national interests in the Arctic and its vision of the future, defining the Arctic as Russia's main strategic resource base and the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation, emphasising its commitment to international laws. Similarly, the *Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period up to 2020 and Beyond* focuses on the priorities of Russia's Arctic policies. "This strategy aims to transform the region into Russia's future resource base by providing greater investments, protecting Russian borders and safeguarding territory, ensuring environmental safety, promoting science and research, and contributing to international stability." (Keffertpütz, 2010:6) In 2013 the *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation* was approved by President Putin; it focuses on the sustainable socio-economic development of the Russian Arctic. (Lassin, 2014) These documents comprise Russia's Arctic strategy. Russia is operating at various levels in the Arctic: political, economic, military, and legal.

The US Geological Survey estimates that most of the oil and gas potential of the Arctic is in the Russian sector: 60 percent of the undiscovered Arctic oil and gas. (Geology.com, 2015) The Russian Arctic nowadays produces about 20 percent of the country's gross domestic product and approximately 22 percent of the total Russian exports. (Zysk, 2010) As mentioned before, deposits in the Barents Sea are already being exploited, while many fields and other projects for exploration in both the Barents and Kara Seas are being developed, as well as smaller prospects in the Laptev and East Siberian seas.

The Yamal LNG project is one of the biggest LNG undertakings in world. Located in the Yamal Peninsula under extreme cold conditions, Yamal LNG is currently the main Russian project in the region. Production is planned to start in 2017. The total production capacity will be 16 million tonnes of LNG per year and it will be the second LNG plant in Russia after Sakhalin-II. Another important project is the exploitation of the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea; it is one of the largest gas fields in the world. Extreme weather conditions, accessibility, and administrative difficulties have slowed down the realisation of the project. (See Lassi, 2013)

Although the Arctic offers promising energy-revenues, the data is still inaccurate. What is more, several other factors may hinder the development of the energy resources in the Arctic: the considerably high costs for extraction due to the harsh weather, oil and gas prices, and Russia's business climate.

The Northern Sea Route[2] (NSR) comprises a set of sea routes along the Russian Arctic shoreline. During the last century it served as a national route connecting northern ports and linked by rivers to the interior of the country. The NSR provide access to different Russian ports: Novy Port, near the mouth of the Ob River; Dikson, Dudinka, and Igarka at the mouth of the Yenisei River; Tiksi at the Lena River; and Pevek and Mys Shmidta along the coastline of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. (Map 14)

The route remained practically closed for foreign vessels until the 2000s, when it opened in the summer. In 2009 two German ships made the first commercial voyage along the route with assistance from Russian icebreakers. (Zysk, 2012) The NSR is of interest to global shipping firms as an alternative to the longer southern routes between the Far East and Europe. The competitive advantages of the NSR are the speed of delivery and the resulting financial savings, and being a safer route. Nowadays, the route is opened through the ice and maintained by Russian nuclear ice breakers (Artika and Taymyr Class). The Rotterdam-Yokohama route, for instance, could be reduced from 18,350 km to 11,100km. On average, a dry cargo vessel takes 29 days to sail from Rotterdam to Yokohama past the

[2]The law passed by the Russian State Duma on the regulation of commercial navigation defines the NSR as "The aquatic space adjacent to the northern coast of the Russian Federation, covering internal waters, territorial sea, the contiguous zone and the exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation and bounded by division lines across maritime areas with the United States and the parallel Cape Dezhnev in the Bering Strait, west meridian of the Cape of Desire to the Novaya Zemlya archipelago, eastern coastline of the Novaya Zemlya archipelago, and the western boundaries of the Matochkin, Kara, and Yugorsky Straits."

Cape of Good Hope, through the Suez Channel 22 days. Along the NSR it would only take around 15 days. (Valdai, 2012)

President Putin has defined the NSR as a "future international transport artery that will compete with other maritime routes." (Yep, 2012) Thus, "The modernisation of the Northern Sea Route for international commercial use becomes strategically important for Russia." (Valdai, 2012:64) Russia's Transportation Strategy to 2030 establishes aims such as developing the NSR and the river networks that link it to the interior of the country. The construction of new diesel and nuclear powered ice breakers is planned. Russia is the only country in the world with a nuclear-powered icebreaker fleet.

Travelling along the NSR poses several challenges for Russia. First, to make it commercially viable Russia needs to upgrade, if not rebuild, the decaying infrastructure along the route. The western part of the route, from Dikson to Murmansk, is in good working order due to the use of the Norilsk Nickel ice breakers fleet. The eastern part has been essentially neglected: it is poorly monitored by Russia's Coastal Border Guard and weather stations from the Soviet era have been partially destroyed so there is no proper meteorological support or rescue capabilities. (Valdai, 2012) There are only few people living in the region as a result of the severe deterioration of living conditions. As noted previously, since the dissolution of the USSR the population of the Arctic ports declined markedly and the infrastructure of towns seriously deteriorated. Some ports on the Laptev and East Siberia seas have been totally depopulated and officially abandoned. Human habitation of the north is expensive, especially during winter. Only cities such as Dudinka, which serves Norilsk Nickel, are profitable enough to maintain facilities. (Valdai, 2012)

High operation costs and the unpredictability of the Arctic weather seriously limit the viability of using the route. The shallow depth of some parts of the route and the retention of ice, particularly in the Vilkitskiy Strait (Taymyr Peninsula, the northernmost point in Asia) seriously restrict the transit of ships even in summer. (Valdai, 2012)

Opening the Northern Sea Route has prompted discussion regarding the sovereignty of the route. Russia defines the NSR as a national transportation route under its jurisdiction, (Zysk, 2010) but some Arctic countries, such as the United States, do not recognise Russia's sovereignty over the route. Thus, another future point of contention could be transit fees charged by Russia to foreign vessels.

In the long term, trans-Arctic regular shipping through the NSR remains uncertain. The number of vessels making the route rose from four in 2010 to around fifty in 2012 and to 71 in 2013, however, in 2014 it slumped to about 25. (Pettersen, 2014)

Although the increasing accessibility of the Arctic has brought most attention to the economic potential, it means serious concerns for Russia as it opens its vast coastline and territorial waters. "Russian perceptions of the Arctic are largely based on security considerations." (Lassin, 2014b:8) It should be noted that most of Russia's civilian and nuclear facilities are located in the Arctic.

In recent years Russia has substantially increased its military activity in the Arctic in order to improve its military capacity on an operational level. For instance, the number of flights by Russian Long Range Aviation has continually increased since 2007 and the flights of strategic long-range bombers over the Arctic have resumed. Russian Arctic naval activity is also on the rise, including high-profile exercises and the resumption of regular patrols of Arctic waters by Russia's Northern Fleet, which is the largest and most powerful Russian fleet. Russia has announced that by 2020 will deploy a combined-armed force including military, border and coast guard units, to protect and secure its economic and political interests in the Arctic. (RIA NOVOSTI, 2013)

Russia's military doctrine, approved by Putin in 2014, included for the first time the protection of national interests in the Arctic among the main priorities for its armed forces in times of peace. In recent years Russia has conducted several military exercises in the region and plans to create a network of naval facilities for submarines and warships to ensure its defence capabilities. (Sputnik, 2015a) In military terms, Russia seeks to secure and defend its interests by increasing its presence and creating a favourable operating system regime for its armed forces, troops and coastal border guards. (Yusuf, 2013)

By the same token, Russia seeks to secure the region legally due to the several national claims on maritime borders and rights on the Arctic between circumpolar states. In 1982, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) set the rules for establishing the extent of the offshore jurisdiction of the coastal states, ratified by Russia in 1997. The UNCLOS grants sovereignty rights for exploring and exploiting natural resources over a 370 km economic exclusive zone (EEZ). Sovereign rights over a wider area can be claimed if it is demonstrated with geological evidence that the outer continental

shelf reaches beyond the 200 nautical miles limit, in other words, that the area claimed is a prolongation of its land territory. (Howard, 2010) Currently Russia, Denmark and Canada claim sovereignty over Arctic waters by extending the EEZ under UNCLOS.

In 2001 Russia made its first legal claim and submitted a proposed outer boundary to its continental shelf in order to extend its EEZ beyond the two hundred nautical miles as stipulated by UNCLOS. Russia claims about 1.2 million square kilometres of the Arctic shelf, which area is said to contain around 10 billion cubic meters of hydrocarbons. Russia's claim stems from the argument that the Mendeleev and Lomonosov ridges are a continuation of the Siberian shelf and therefore the underwater terrain between them it is an extension of Russian territory. This claim was first submitted to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, however, the Commission felt that there was insufficient data for its support and recommended that Russia present more geological evidence. Russia is now gathering data and it is planning to resubmit its proposal before 2017. If accepted, it would provide the country with a vast area of the Arctic. It is argued that Russia's primary concern is not the acquisition of territory for natural resources but "in keeping foreign powers out of what it regards as its strategically vital region". (Howard, 2010)

The increasingly more assertive and active stance of Russia in the Arctic is looked on with concern by other Arctic states. This has fuelled speculation about a new Cold War, particularly in western publications, however, it should be noted that Russia's Arctic policies do not greatly differ from those of its counterparts. (Kefferpütz, 2010) Russia's Arctic approach is more the return of a major power to a normal level of activity in a region that was practically neglected due to the decay of the armed forces. (Zysk, 2010) In words of the Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov: "A lot of people are wondering: what are Russians doing in the Arctic? There is talk that Russians are building up their [military] presence there, but I think the answer here is very simple. We are ensuring the security of our country on our legitimate territory." (Sputnik, 2015a)

In general, the early predictions of military conflict in the region seem for the time being groundless. Firstly, the level of intergovernmental cooperation has gradually increased. The most accessible oil and gas deposits are within the EEZ of the coastal states. (Collins, 2013) Arctic states have agreed to resolve territorial claims beyond the EEZ through the UNCLOS.

In a like manner, the early optimistic predictions regarding the economic potential of the region, as well about the NSR as a new shipping lane, seem to have been overestimated. The high cost of resource extraction on the Arctic, along with the limitations of using the NSR as a trans-continental shipping lane, may be a considerable impediment to the economic prospects of Russia in the region.

It should be noted that the situation in the Arctic is now much more difficult than prior to the crisis in the Ukraine as Western sanctions against Russia were primarily directed to Arctic resource extraction and it seems that as long as the crisis continues cooperation will remain at a low level. China could provide Russia capital and financial backing for the development of resources but it still does not have the technology for Arctic-resource extraction. As noted by Makarov:

> For the last year, the prospects for cooperation, the prospects for the development of oil and gas resources and the Northern Sea Route, they are much worse, because of the decrease of oil prices and now these projects are not very interesting for the oil companies. Moreover, the sanctions were directed particularly on Arctic resource extraction. Most of the joint projects are frozen, they also weren't very beneficial because of low oil prices, and with these prices these projects do not make any sense. Regarding the Northern Sea Route, it is not very attractive as well, the vessels passing the route decreased dramatically by 70 percent last year. (Interview 5)

4.3. Conclusions

The crises in Siberia following the demise of the USSR reversed the four-hundred-year trend of eastward migration from European Russia initiated by Yermak in 1552. This, in the context of the ongoing shift of the world's economic and political affairs from Europe to Asia and especially in the context of the rising China, provokes serious concerns within the Russian elite that in the long term the country could begin to effectively lose sovereignty over its eastern resource-rich and vast territories.

Sovereignty and territorial integrity are central notions to the Russian state. According to its greatpowerness, Russia has developed great power capabilities in order to secure the existence of the nation. As a great power, Russia must exert full sovereignty over its whole territory. In this sense, sovereignty is a key element in Russia's foreign policy, and in particular in the external relations of Siberia, as it is closely linked with Russia's

great power ambitions. This thesis defines sovereignty as "the exercise of supreme authority over a geographical defined territory." (Ziegler, 2012:401)

As argued, Russia consolidated its great power status only after its expanded to the Pacific. That is why for the Russian leadership potential threats – real or imagined – of the loss of economic or political control over Asiatic Russia are to the same as the loss of its sovereignty and therefore the loss of Russia's great power status.

Siberia symbolises Russia's opportunities and vulnerabilities. Siberia's vastness, richness, and socio-economic problems epitomises the difficulty of controlling territory and integrating it into a broader region. By the same token, it embodies Russia's great power dilemmas between strategic security concerns and economic opportunities, between international cooperation and national control, and promoting private investments while maintaining control over natural strategic assets. Russia strives to modernise its economic structure, to develop the resources of Siberia, and to keep intact the country's integrity.

As pointed out, the conquest, settlement, and integration of Siberia with the rest of the country has been done selectively, depending on the interests of European Russia and the country as a whole. The centre developed a semi-colonial relationship with Siberia, which gradually became the raw material appendage of European Russia and could not actually fully integrate into the rest of the country. In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries, however, Siberia continued to be instrumental. The development of Siberia has followed the military-strategic and economic requirements of the centre, giving absolute priority to the national requirements and interests considered by the ruling elite, while the regional priorities were constantly relegated and disregarded. Russia has pursued a strategy of regional development in the context of the development of the country as a whole. As this chapter argues, so far a semi-colonial approach continues. Therefore, Russia has not only the task to integrate Asiatic Russia into Asia but a dual assignment: to integrate Asiatic Russia into the broader Asia-Pacific region and to further develop ties with the European part of Russia. (Kuhrt, 2012:478)

According to Russia's greatpowerness, Russia must secure its territorial integrity and sovereignty to retain its great power status. Thus, the regions' security issues are at the heart of Russian great power policies in NEA. Failing to integrate Siberia into NEA and the

broader Asia-Pacific region, however, would render Russia a 'raw material appendage' of Asia, bringing to a halt Russia's great power ambitions in Asia. Thus, the internal and external geopolitics of Siberia are closely interconnected. "What appear at first glance as purely domestic issues, such as migration and demographics, environmental degradation, and energy resources, can all be securitised and linked back into Russia's self-conceptualisation as either a successful 'Great Power' on the path to modernisation or, conversely, as a declining resource base and 'raw materials appendage.'" (Kuhrt, 2012:472)

Russia's greatpowerness has an important role in Russia's domestic policies and external relations. Greatpowerness is a central idea of Russian national identity and has a major impact in the country's foreign policy. As Anne Clunan observes:

> Russia's national interests have been not defined on the basis of conventional cost-benefit assessments, perceptions of material threat of the identities projected onto Russia by other countries. Aspirations to regain the international great power status that Russians believe their country enjoyed during the Tsarist and Soviet past were critical to the creation of its present national identity and security issues. (Clunan, 2014:288)

The internal development and foreign affairs of Asiatic Russia are conducted by the Russian state under great power logic. Russia's main security concern is to maintain *de facto* sovereignty over the region while developing it. Russia is wary of becoming a raw material appendage of China, which hinders border cooperation. This chapter argues that Russia has not successfully addressed the above-mentioned socio-economic problems. It seems that a comprehensive strategy linking great power ambitions and socio-economic development of the region is necessary.

As will be further explained in the following chapters, the risk is that border regions of the RFE could become to a great extent dependent on Asia, particularly on China. The preoccupation in Russia is that further economic integration with NEA would weaken the ties of Russia's eastern provinces with European Russia and strengthen the influence of other countries (China in particular) on Russia's east. Nathasha Kuhrt notes that there is a fear/risk that if the process of integration fails, instead of a double integration (into Russia and Asia-Pacific) Russia's eastern provinces may face a future of double periphery. (Kuhrt, 2012:480)

Without China's rise, the issue of sovereignty might not be an issue at all. Russia's apparent dependence on China brings the region's security issues to the forefront. Thus, the

issue of whether China, Japan, or South Korea should be considered the main partners to develop Asiatic Russia, and the economic dependency of certain eastern federal entities on these countries, particularly on China, is viewed as a matter of national security.

Under the administration of President Putin, several programmes for the development of Siberia and in particular of the Russian Far East have been announced. These programmes are aimed to integrate the region into the Russian economy and into the Asia-Pacific economies. However, integration depends to a great extent on the development of the Russian economy in general.

This thesis takes Russia as a great power between the West and Asia as a key idea of national identity. Russia's greatpowerness is a prime component in Russia's foreign policy construction. Similarly, Asiatic Russia is a central element of Russia's national identity and therefore plays an important role in the country's great power foreign policy construction. The second part of this thesis discusses the dilemmas arising as a result of contradictions between the internal geopolitics and external geopolitics of Siberia. Similarly, it analyses Russia's security concerns in NEA and the diverse partnerships it is promoting with Northeast Asian countries: China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, focusing the discussion on Russia's problems with security and development and the implications of the involvement of NEA countries in the context of Russia's great power identity.

The first section of this thesis tried to connect national identity to Siberia's geographical settings in order to understand how these two elements have interacted in the post-Soviet period. The second part of this research will attempt to connect these aspects to Siberia's external strategy and the new external conditions in Northeast Asia. The function and perception of Asiatic Russia has never been exclusively internal or external but has always arisen out of the interaction of the two. Therefore this thesis does not only study changes in Asiatic Russia in the post-Soviet period; but also the new external conditions in Northeast Asia. By looking at the way these aspects have interacted across the changes in the last years, Asiatic Russia can be geopolitically located in Northeast Asia.

Keep a cool head and maintain a low profile. Never take the lead - but aim to do something big.

Deng Xiaoping

CHAPTER FIVE

Russia-China

Russia's economic and security interests in Northeast Asia have considerably changed in the last few decades. The rapid development of the region has brought Russia to intensify economic exchanges with China, Japan, and South Korea. Nevertheless, the dynamism of the region and particularly the rise of China in power constitute potential security threats – real or imagined – to Russia's greatpowerness. Russia's evolving strategies in Northeast Asia are in part shaped by the leadership and the elite's perception of what great power is and the place of Asiatic Russia in the country's great power identity. The second part of this thesis considers the new external conditions in Northeast Asia to connect Siberia's external strategy to internal geopolitics and ideas on national identity. Arguably, one of the most important factors contributing to this new reality in Northeast Asia is the rise of China.

Russian and Chinese leaders consider that the similarities in their worldviews are an important basis for their partnership and, in fact, the growing spheres of policy coordination reflect these shared political values. The Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership is arguably one of the most important elements of the new world order and the achievements made by the two countries in the last two decades are noteworthy. Both countries have many common strategies and interests, from global to regional and the relationship is self-sufficient.

Historically, the Russian national identity has been shaped by two main components: its relationship with Europe and internal factors. The context has changed in recent years, however, due to the rise in power of Asia in general, and of China in particular. Therefore, the Russia-China strategic partnership plays an important role in

Russia's insistence on its great power status as it legitimates both its identity as an Asian power and helps to maintain its global power status in international affairs.

Russia´s plans to develop Asiatic Russia, particularly the Russian Far East, are based on China being a priority partner, at least for the foreseeable future. Indeed, China is currently the main investor in the RFE. Nevertheless, the significant gap between the level of political contacts and the scope of economic cooperation, particularly resource driven economic cooperation with China aggravates Russia's anxiety of dependence on resource exports and becoming a 'raw material appendage' of China. Consequently, Russia constantly securitizes relations with China, particularly regional economic relations.

The chapter tries to explain the dynamics of the Russia-China relations and how this partnership is central to safeguarding the security, political, and economic interests of both the countries. For Russia, the importance of the partnership with China is essential to the security of the RFE and central to the country's self-conceptualisation as a great power. This chapter argues that in the long term the viability of the Russia-China strategic partnership will depend to a great extent on whether Russia can successfully develop Siberia, and especially the RFE.

This research puts together the main elements of the bilateral relationship and attempts to demonstrate how China presents a major identity dilemma for Russia: on the one hand, Russia's actual engagement with China substantiates its identity as a global and regional power; on the other hand, at a regional level China embodies a potential menace to Russia's great power identity. The chapter is organised as follows: (1), it describes the background to present Russia-China relations, (2), it briefly reviews the political and economic determinants of the bilateral ties, (3), then it focuses on Sino-Russian relations at a regional level, and the position of Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic within the bilateral relations. Finally (4), the chapter concludes by reflecting upon the relevance of Siberia and the RFE in the future of the Russian-Chinese relationship.

5.1. Background

For much of their history Russia and China were separated by thousands of kilometres and they had little knowledge about each other. Rare contact between peoples took place during

the Mongol Yoke, as they were at the same time part of the vast Mongol Empire, but as the Mongol Empire decayed these contacts virtually ceased. It was only after the Tsardom of Muscovy spread across the north of Asia in the seventeenth century that the Russians and the Chinese first met officially. The farther east the Russians went, the more they knew about the enormous empire in the east, but they did not know how far that mighty empire spread. In the late sixteenth century there were some Russian attempts to reach China but they were unsuccessful. The first Russian mission to reach China took place in 1618. The delegation led by Petlin was the first official contact between Russia and China, and it brought unique information about China to the Russians, but over the next thirty five years no other Russian mission to China took place. The first Russian ambassadorial delegation to China was sent in 1653, followed by other two embassies in 1658 and 1668; they reached Peking and were granted audience with the emperor, but they could not establish official ties with the Qing Empire and were treated as tributary missions. It should be noted that the ambassadorial delegations occurred at a time when the Cossacks were fighting the Manchus in the north. The Russian embassies travelled to Peking not through the taiga but through the south, via Turkestan and Mongolia, and there was no coordination between the diplomatic missions sent from Moscow and the clashes in the north. Only in 1670 did the Chinese establish a connection between the ambassadorial delegations in Peking and the Cossacks in the north, and urged the Russians to retreat from the Amur region. A new embassy led by Milescu was sent in 1675 in order to establish bilateral ties with China in western terms of diplomatic relations, but this was unsuccessful and the Chinese responded that 'there was one – and only one– system of relations' between China and other peoples: a tributary system. (March, 1996:47) Thus, it should be emphasised that when Russia and China encountered each other they had different views of the way bilateral contacts should develop. Saint Petersburg State University Nikolay Samoylov argues that whereas the Russians pursued equal bilateral relations, to promote trade and to address the border issues. In contrast, the Qing Empire, based on its traditional worldview, treated Russia as a vassal and tributary 'barbarians', and attempted to push them as far as possible from its borders. (Interview 6)

As described in Chapter Three, after intense fighting for the control of a Russian *ostrog* in Albazin (1685-1686) between the Chinese and Russians Cossacks, China and

Russia agreed to start peace negotiations to live 'in peace and harmony'. (March, 1996:52) In 1686 Golovin was sent with plenipotentiary powers to negotiate with the Chinese in Nerchinsk. On the one hand, the Russians wanted to retain Nerchinsk on the Shilka River and to establish trade with China, but on the other hand, China wanted the Russians to retreat from the Amur region. Neither side wanted to continue the border clashes. Within this framework negotiations took place, resulting in the Treaty of Nerchinsk which demarcated the border between both empires and established the basis for peaceful coexistence. According to a Samoylov, the Treaty of Nerchinsk is an equal document that initiated the development of bilateral relations between China and Russia. This is the first document in the history of Russian-China relations. The treaty laid the foundations for peaceful relations in the next century and a half. (Interview 6) Although in geographic terms the demarcation of the border was very vague, the historical value of the treaty is based on the fact that two completely different empires with almost no knowledge of each other, with entirely distinct cultures, languages and worldviews, reached a historical compromise to live peacefully and to avoid serious conflicts. As highlighted by Samoylov, Russia was the first country with whom China established diplomatic relations. (Interview 6) In the light of contemporary Sino-Russian interactions this event should not be overlooked.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian Empire had extended control over Ussuria and Amuria, cut off China from the sea of North Korea and founded cities along the border with China: Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Blagovechensk. "For the Chinese, the boundary became the physical incarnation of China's failure to end the predations of European civilization, while for the Russians, their expanded boundary enshrined their country's great power status." (Maxwell, 2007:50) Russia's presence in the Amur region was consolidated following the creation of the USSR in 1922.

The communist victory in China opened a new phase in Russia-China bilateral relations. In 1950, Mao and Stalin met in Moscow and signed the Treaty of Friendship Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and the recently formed People's Republic of China, and both leaders put any territorial questions aside. Several issues arose following Stalin's death, however, particularly after Khrushchev's 'secret speech' made at the Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. This led to

ideological divergences between both countries, particularly regarding Stalin's legacy and the relationship of socialism and the capitalist world (Soviet Revisionism). Mao also rejected the idea that China should continue playing a secondary role in the alliance. The situation was only aggravated after the USSR's withdrawal of all technical advisors and help from China in 1960. The relationship did not improve but continued to decline following the assumption of power by Brezhnev, and border issues became much more problematic. Misunderstandings and disputes that had previously been pacified by local authorities increased exponentially. Similarly, the dispute over the location of the border exploded. According to a map of the border that was a component of the Treaty of Peking (1860), the border between China and Russia did not follow the *thalweg* principle, but was drawn along the Chinese bank of the Amur and Ussuri River, and through the Kazakevichevo/Fuyuan Channel. The Soviet Union thus claimed the sovereignty of rivers and islands. China dismissed these claims by the Soviet Union and appealed to the *thalweg* principle[3]. The USSR claimed that there were no territorial questions between the countries, and struggles at the border increased between Chinese civilians and Soviet border guards. The bloodiest clash took place in 1969 on Damanskii/Zhenbao Island, when Chinese military units attacked Soviet border guards. (Ryabushkin, 2007) Attempts to arrange to resolve the issue by diplomatic means failed, and although the clashes ended following a meeting between Kosygin and Zhou Enlai at Beijing's airport, no progress was made concerning the border issue. Indeed, for almost two decades there were no significant advance in negotiations and the border between China and the Soviet Union was heavily militarised and literally fortified. About 25 percent of all Soviet armed forces were concentrated in the RFE and both sides feared a full scale war.

Rapprochement between the USSR and China started in the late 1980s following Gorbachev's discourse in Vladivostok in 1986. In this famous speech he called for "an atmosphere of good-neighbourliness", to cooperate with one another, and to transform the dividing border "into a line of peace and friendship". (NY Times, 1986) In 1989, after thirty years without high level contacts between both countries, Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping met in Beijing and called for a new relationship between these socialist countries.

[3] A long-established principle of international law: in the absence of any specification in a treaty, when navigable rivers comprise an international boundary, the division will be an imaginary line along the deepest part of the main channel.

Similarly, in regard to the border issue, a breakthrough came under Gorbachev's government when the Soviet Union accepted that negotiations should resume and would be based on international principles. China responded positively and border negotiations were resumed. In Moscow, the border demarcation agreement between the USSR and the PCR on the Soviet-Chinese State border at its eastern part was signed on May 1991. The border was to be drawn following the *thawleg* principle.

The demise of the USSR resulted in the complete de-ideologisation of the relationship, however, during the first Yeltsin period, Russia's foreign policy was heavily oriented towards the West and therefore the rapprochement between Russia and China followed a slow pace. In the aftermath of the meeting between Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin in 1996, the Strategic Partnership between China and Russia was announced in Shanghai; it was said to be the core of the relationship between the countries for the twentieth first century. Both countries ratified the agreement concerning the demarcation of the Russia-China border in 1992 and it was implemented in 1997. Practically none of the islands on the Amur or Ussuri rivers had any economic or military importance. The border was demarcated through a "fifty-fifty" approach and thousands of islands were apportioned between Russia and China. Most of the islands were under Russia's control, and so hundreds of islands were handed to China. In the end, 1,163 islands remained under Russian control and 1,281 islands were recognised as Chinese territory. It should be stressed that despite several difficulties the border demarcation succeeded because each side made an effort to find a mutually acceptable compromise beyond the use of technical staff and using political tools such as the fifty-fifty approach. (Iwashita, 2007)

After the accession of Vladimir Putin to power in 1999, rapprochement accelerated. From the outset, Putin looked eastwards in order to diversify Russia's international ties and restore the country's status as a great power. In 2001, Vladimir Putin and Jiang Zemin signed the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and China. According to Vladimir Portyakov from IFEAS RAS: "The treaty was the legal formalisation of the partnership. The treaty aimed to lay the foundations for a long-term comprehensive development of relations and strategic interaction between the two countries within an equal trust-based partnership." (Interview 2) In 2002 the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was formed, which, in addition to Russia and China, includes

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This was the first international organisation established with China's participation. Nevertheless, the issue of three islands remained unresolved: Bolshoi Island in the Aigun River, and Tarabarov and Bolshoi Ussuriskii Island at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri rivers near Khabarovsk. For strategic and security reasons, what mattered most to Russia was the possession of Bear/Bolshoi Ussuriiskii Island. According to the *thawleg* principle, the island should be assigned to China, but Russia considered it unnegotiable. The issue was put temporarily aside in the 1990s during the negotiation process. In 2004, China and Russia announced that negotiations continued and the issue of the three islands was finally resolved and a supplementary agreement on the eastern section of the border was signed. Following the fifty-fifty approach, the Bolshoi Island was divided fifty-fifty, Tarabarov Island was given to China and Bolshoi Ussuriskii Island was divided almost fifty-fifty, and so that all that had already been built by Russia remained on the Russian side. (See Iwashita, 2007) Thus, the entire length of the boundary was settled by 2004. The success of the border negotiations was of paramount importance for the bilateral relationship. It marked the beginning of the strategic partnership between the two nations.

The partnership has thus dramatically improved, and has remained practically unaffected through the presidential transitions. Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin, Hu Jintao and Dmitri Medvedev, and Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin have continued the tradition of regular meetings to exchange views on international and bilateral issues. In the last 25 years, the bilateral relations have evolved and dramatically improved, from 'the worst nightmare to strategic cooperation'. (Yu, 2007:48)

The list of accomplishments by Russia and China since Gorbachev's visit to Beijing in 1989 is notable, particularly taking into account the fact that Russia and China are countries with different historical experiences, institutions and development levels, which are modernising and developing their relations at the same time. (Feng, 2013) It should be emphasised that, in spite of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, historically there have been very few conflicts between the two, if we compare this relationship with others, and cooperation was usual, so from a historic perspective the current level of collaboration is not unusual. "Russia and China have no special 'heavy historical heritage' that could fuel animosity. Contrary to popular myths there are no large countries along Russia's border

with which it worried less than with China. […] It is hard to find two other large countries that would have coexisted for over 300 years and fought each other so little." (Kashin, 2013) Yu Bin believes that the current bilateral relation is perhaps the most equal and normal "[…] between the two largest entities with entirely different political, cultural, and religious systems." (Bin, 2007:58)

Given the challenges and potential conflicts, the feasibility of the partnership in the mid- and long-term is often questioned, particularly in the West. Many western scholars consider the Russia-China partnership not strategic, but a limited partnership. (Larin, 2011) It is often argued that both countries have neither similar worldviews nor priorities. Moreover, they have a long history of mutual enmity and radical socio-political systems. (Bin, 2007) By the same token, the low profile of the economic relationship and the fact that the volume of trade between the two is much smaller than that between China and other big economies, namely the US, Japan, South Korea, is often noted.

According to Bobo Lo, the Russia-China Strategic Partnership is an 'axis of convenience', just a traditional great power relationship, and, although relations in the short to medium term will continue to be good, in the long term it is less promising as China becomes stronger and Russia weaker. "The key question is not whether Moscow and Beijing will undermine the existing international institutions and norms to create a new world order, but whether the unequal partnership can stand the test of time and changing circumstances." (Lo, 2008:56) Other scholars go even further and call China a future threat to Russia. In the words of Charles Ziegler: "Objectively, China will likely pose a greater threat to Russian security and sovereignty that will Europe and the United States over the long term." (Ziegler, 2012:410) Nevertheless, as noted by Elizabeth Wishnick: "Much of the discussion Russia-China relations in the West is based on zero-sum conceptions of great power relations, and other dimensions of the partnership are often underestimated." (Wishnick, 2016:4)

Russia and China are undergoing profound changes. In the beginning, the reforms were to a certain extent implemented through the example of the West but now both countries pursue their own paths for effective development based on national conditions and interests. (Feng, 2013) It seems that Russian and Chinese have moved away from the love-or-hate oscillation toward more pragmatic mutual expectations. (Bin, 2007:79)

5.2. Determinants

The Russian and Chinese leaderships, state media, and many analysts, claim the state of their bilateral relationship at its highest point and describe it as the best in history, saying that there are no serious issues that cannot be resolved. In the words of Fudan University scholar Zhao Huasheng, "Chinese-Russian relations have maintained good relations for more than 15 years. In the 400 years of China-Russia relations, although there have been longer periods of stability, there has never before been a time when relations were both stable and close for such a lasting period." (Interview 9)

5.2.1. Political

Presidents Putin and Xi had their first official summit meeting in Moscow in March 2013. The visit of Xi Jinping to Russia was very symbolic, as it was his first foreign trip as a head of state of the People's Republic of China. The meeting was considered productive, as many important cooperation agreements and high-level trade deals were signed. Similarly, both leaders agreed to 'translate the advantage of the unprecedented high level of political relations into concrete cooperation results in economic, people-to-people and other fields' and agreed to 'resolutely support each other in efforts to protect national sovereignty, security, and development interests.' (Koch, 2014)

Similarly, President's Putin visit to Shanghai in May 2014 constituted a landmark in Russia-China bilateral relations; Russia not only accelerated its turn to Asia by signing the gas supply agreement with China, but the meeting took the partnership to a new stage. Presidents Putin and Xi released a joint statement in which they declared that China-Russia relations have reached a new stage of comprehensive strategic partnership:

> Firm in joint efforts, China-Russia relations have been upgraded to a new stage of comprehensive strategic partnership. The two sides will maintain high-level strategic mutual trust and deepen dialogue, improve the efficiency of existing bilateral mechanisms for cooperation between governments, parliaments, local

> authorities and establish new mechanisms for cooperation when necessary, to ensure comprehensive and rapid development of pragmatic cooperation, cultural exchanges and civil exchanges to achieve greater results, closer coordination of diplomatic action. This helps their domestic large-scale Sino-Russian economic reforms successfully promote and enhance the welfare of the two peoples to improve both the international status and influence to facilitate the establishment of a more just and equitable international order. (President of Russia, 2014)

The statement highlights the unprecedented level of trust between the leaderships as well as the regular and close multilevel contacts between the countries. It can be said that there are much stronger contacts on many levels than during the 'honeymoon' between China and the USSR under Mao and Stalin. (Karaganov, 2013) There is already a framework for cooperation which permits the leadership of both countries to exchange perspectives and to address relevant issues on a regular basis. There is consultation and cooperation on a wide range of issues, from central to local governments, non-governmental exchange, as well as other fields of low minor political cooperation. (Yi, 2014) In the same joint statement it was declared that:

> The two sides abide by the July 16, 2001 signed the "Sino-Russian Good-Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation Treaty" on issues concerning the core interests of both countries to maintain sovereignty, territorial integrity, national security firm to continue to support each other. Both sides are opposed to any attempt to interfere in the internal affairs and practices, firmly safeguard the basic norms of international law, "UN Charter" established, with full respect for the other independent choice of development path and maintain the rights of their historical, cultural and moral values. (President of Russia, 2014)

Russia and China share many interests in the post-Cold War order, and see each other as strategic. Furthermore, there is a common understanding of almost all major international issues and therefore both countries have similar approaches to most relevant global matters. During the last decade they have coordinated their foreign policies and have presented several joint initiatives, particularly after the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in 1998. One of the most powerful drivers bringing Russia and China together is their shared strategic interest in counterbalancing the perceived hegemony of the United States and the West in international affairs. "China and Russia share a common denominator in the realm of foreign policy: to manage and, if possible, decrease the impact of US influence upon international affairs." (Pursiainen, 181:2) They challenge US unipolarity and call for a multipolar world order, which they both see as advantageous. Both countries consider

strategic the partnership to counterbalance the diplomatic and economic might of the West. They feel uneasy about the western-centred system of relations, as they consider that they have not been treated as equals by the West. (Smirnova, 2015) Russia and China emphasise that globalisation it is not only about the US and its allies, and its western democracy, but 'it is also China's dream and Russia's global power ambitions'. (Feng, 2013) Similarly, Russia and China underline the importance of national sovereignty and strongly oppose western foreign intervention in local matters, thus reiterating the central role of the Security Council of the United Nations. Finally, they find it imperative to fight against terrorism and separatism, which they see as threats to their national security.

It can be said that their dissatisfaction with the US role as the sole superpower and dominant pole was crucial in the Sino-Russian rapprochement. It should be noted that there is no a single factor, but many other local and regional factors contributing to the consolidation of a truly strategic partnership. According to Portyakov:

> The Russia-China relationship is to a great extent self-sufficient, influence of external factors does exist, but in spite of all the changes it is possible to keep a normal level of relations. Both nations strive not to accentuate those issues on which there are divergent positions but to underline those aspects in which the positions of both countries are closer and coincide. This allows us to make our bilateral relationship stable in spite of all the changes on international relations in the global arena. (Interview 2)

Russia and China believe their bilateral relationship to be a "landmark" in world politics and a guarantee to peace and stability in the region and in the world, as well as being one of the most important elements of the new world order. Similarly, both sides believe that this relationship is not only the key to safeguarding their security, political, and economic interests, but for promoting a more balanced, peaceful, and just world order. Elizabeth Wishnick considers that "The growing normative affinities underpinning their interdependence have implications that reach far beyond the boundaries of their partnership. […] Increasingly, the Sino-Russian partnership has consequence not just for their bilateral interactions but for global governance as a whole." (Wishnick 2016, 14)

Former Chinese President Hu Jintao emphasised that improving Sino-Russian relations is not only good for both countries, but for the rest of the world as well, because it encourages the multipolarisation and democratisation of international relations. (Bolt, 2010) According to S. Lavrov, the Russia-China Strategic Partnership is an important

factor in strengthening stability and security in Eurasia and the world at large. Similarly, President Putin stated that the partnership "[…] is not directed against anyone, but it is about construction and strengthening justice and the democratic foundations of the international life. This partnership is something needed in today's world". (Kian, 2012) The Chinese State Council's Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations sees relations with Russia as the friendliest of those between China and other powers. Similarly, President Xi Jinping has stated that Russia-China relations "[…] are among the most important relations in the world. They are the best between great powers." (Feng, 2013)

Russia and China call their type of interaction a new form of great power relations, not a zero-sum relationship but a harmonious and friendly coexistence between two world powers. In the words of Xing Guancheng, "China and Russia set a new model of relations between major powers after the end of the Cold War, and found a way of treating each other with respect and cultivating sustainable cooperation." (Xinhua, 2014a) According to the former Ambassador to China Denisov, it is a good example of cooperation and trust between two powers "belonging to different socio-political and cultural civilizational models within a very complex external and internal situation". (Lester, 2014)

Due to the fact that an important part of this partnership is still played only by the leaderships of Russia and China, both sides face several challenges in converting the achieved level of political cooperation to practical cooperation in other fields such as the expansion of the social base, and the continuing lack of trust. Joint military exercises and exchange of intelligence are held to build mutual confidence. Indeed, as Andrey Ostrovskiy from the RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies notes, "both sides recognise that the roots of limitations in the partnership lie in the lack of trust." (Interview 1)

According to Xin Zhang, East China Normal University: "Russia and China are making efforts to build a positive image for each other at home, and ties are being strengthened. Although it will take years, efforts are being made. (Interview 10) In this sense, the elites of both countries are keen to encourage links between the two peoples, through people-to-people exchanges, such as the Year of Russia in China (2006), and the Year of China in Russia (2007); the Year of Russian Language in China (2009) and the Year of Chinese Language in Russia (2010); the Year of Russian Tourism in China (2012) and the Year of Chinese Tourism in Russia (2013); and the China-Russia Youth Year of

Friendship Exchanges in 2014 to 2015. All this is also aimed to avoid sensitivities of the past flourishing as China and Russia still have diverging interpretations of the history of their bilateral relations. The ideological campaign in China, during which the Soviet Union was portrayed as an old enemy, is still remembered by many. “Goodwill now prevails, but some of the old suspicious linger- and some new ones have emerged.” (Karaganov, 2013) Therefore, both countries need the personal contacts between the two heads of state to warm people-to-people exchanges to enrich understanding and to improve mutual communication. (Feng, 2014)

Events during the winter and spring of 2014 and the crisis between Russia and the West in Ukraine, have seemingly pushed Russia closer to China and have provoked concern in the West that an alliance is likely.

In the last twenty years, Russia and China have been opposed to foreign intervention, from the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, to Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, and Syria. In the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, China did not support Russia but remained neutral and did not publicly condemn it. In the same way, China did not oppose the Crimea’s secession of Ukraine and its later union with the Russian Federation, and abstained from voting on a resolution in the UN condemning it. It could be said that the situation troubled China, who had to decide between its partnership with Russia and the principle of non-interference. In the end, China has remained friendly and neutral throughout the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Russia believes that China remained neutral mainly due to internal concerns, but, it believes that China is on their side. Mainstream analysts in Russia believe that China shares Russia’s anxieties over western intervention and backing uprisings, however, it is a very sensitive issue for China given the situation of some minorities in the country, and therefore, it forces the country to remain neutral. China’s friendly neutrality in fact supports Russia, in Russia’s eyes. Putin even thanked China for understanding Russia’s actions in Crimea, and for its leadership that ‘sees the situation in all its historical and political integrity’. (Roy, 2014)

Officially, China has been cautious, as the country is opposed to any foreign intervention. Nevertheless, it has stated that in addition to ‘the long standing principles and basic norms governing international relations’, China has also taken into account the

'history and complexity of the issue'. (Xinhua, 2014b) The Chinese media has generally echoed Russia's arguments about western intervention and many media commentators more explicitly backed Russia, saying that the US 'wants to reduce Russia's strategic space and to contain its resurgence', and that by opposing everything that has to do with Russia, 'Western powers show their Cold War mentality'. As stated in the editorial of China Daily:

> The crisis was at first a matter of domestic political strife in Ukraine. Russian involvement was natural given the substantial Russian interests at stake, and Moscow has moved prudently and within international law. But the West's eagerness to portray the crisis as a clash between freedom and oppression, imperialism and self-determination, even between East and West, is an ominous reminder of the Cold War. (China Daily, 2014)

Similarly, China's state media has generally condemned the Western response implicating Russia in the disappearance of Malaysian Flight 17 and has been increasingly anti-western and more pro-Russian. "The Western rush to judge Russia is not based on evidence or logic. Russia had no motives to bring down MH17." (Keck, 2014c) This stance is taken by most of the Chinese media which argues that Western public opinion is using the disappearance as a political tool to deal with Russia due to its unwillingness to work with western interests.

It should also be mentioned that from 2008 to 2014 President Putin has maintained an approval rating of over 90 percent among Chinese citizens. This is arguably due to the portrayal of Putin in Chinese state mass media as a strong and wise leader who stands up to the West. (Gitter, 2014) Seemingly, the support from the elite has arguably translated to the population. In an opinion poll carried out in 2014, Chinese were asked "Do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of Russia?", and 66 percent of those asked said they had a favourable opinion of Russia, whereas only 23 percent said they did not. (Pew Research Centre, 2014)

One natural question is whether the Russia-China strategic partnership is moving toward a formal alliance. The Western media and some analysts express their concern that China and Russia are gradually building an anti-Western alliance, emphasising that this alliance would be the "only grouping of countries that would be interested in and capable of challenging the US led order". (Chen, 2014) Some others disagree and predict that the partnership is not feasible in the long-term, pointing out the problems such as historical mistrust, competitors, and conflicting interests. Russian and Chinese mainstream analysts

believe that the shortcomings of the relationship are often highlighted in the West, because they fear that Russia and China could join forces against the West.

The majority of Chinese and Russian scholars believe that the partnership has solid foundations and underline the fact that there are several strategic reasons and mutual needs behind it. Zhao Huasheng points out that the partnership is not an alliance and does not pose a threat to the West. (Interview 9) It is said that China and Russia are close, but without having to rely on each other. They are not aligned politically or militarily, but each country has the support of each other and their partnership enhances their position in the world and helps to ensure domestic stability.

For Russia the level of the strategic partnership, one rung below that of a full-fledged alliance, has a number of advantages, as the partnership does not involve major commitments that would limit Russia's freedom to manoeuvre. Russia is not interested in taking sides in regional or global disputes between China and other countries, especially that with Japan. Russia is very careful in siding with China because Russia also seeks closer ties with Japan. Moreover, in the case of a hypothetical US-China confrontation, Russia will likely try to avoid full involvement in order to reap the benefits as a third party, as China did in the 1970s. (Kashin, 2013) It is essential for Russia to preserve an independent stance and be more or less an equal partner, in order to have a comprehensive Asian strategy for developing Siberia and the Russian Far East, and to position the country in the Asia-Pacific.

Russian scholars frequently claim that the continuation of the aggressive policies of the US and its allies towards Russia and China could bring both countries even closer. Vladivostok scholar Artyom Lukin from FEFU suggests that at the global level, the US is pushing Russia and China together, and this could eventually lead to an institutionalised alliance that would bring the world back to bipolarity. (Interview 15) Accordingly, if the West continues with the same approach to Russia and China, it could lead to "an explosive rivalry" between Russia and China and the West." (Interview 15) In this sense, "If the two states feel that they are in danger of pressure, they may find each other natural partners in creating a counterweight to the West." (Simes, 2014) As Dmitri Trenin notes, "[…] only a blind and bellicose policy by Washington can, in theory, prompt China and Russia to form an anti-US alliance." (Trenin, 2013b) In this sense, Vladimir Portyakov argues that "the

recent deterioration of West-Russia relations would not lead to a formal alliance but could move the partnership in that direction. For many people in Russia, current threat from the West is more dangerous than the potential hypothetical threat from the rise of China." (Interview 2)

In China, the three 'noes' are the basis of the relationship with Russia: non-aligned, non-confrontational, and not directed against third parties; these are the basis for mutually beneficial cooperation. (Yi, 2014) Chinese scholar Yi Jiang, Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies (IREECAS) stressed the fact that "Russia is a partner of China but not an ally." (Interview 11) Liu Fenghua from IREECAS argued that for China "an alliance would provoke a serious confrontation with the West and lead to destabilisation of the region." (Interview 12) Moreover, the military alliance that China established with the Soviet Union in 1950 was a negative experience. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union has been the only country with whom China has established an alliance. China rejects any sort of alliance, as its own foreign policy principle, and the topic is taboo in the official discourse. According to Yi Jiang, "China, to avoid confrontation with the outside world, and for a peaceful and external development, does not participate in any alliance. Also alliances mean transferring some sovereignty." (Interview 11)

It seems that on the margins of official thinking, a new discourse on alliances has emerged between scholars in recent years, however. (Zhang, 2012) According to Yan Huetong, China can challenge the world order but cannot by itself shift it from unipolarity to bipolarity unless it forms an alliance with Russia. (Huetong, 2012) Although there are supporters of transforming the strategic partnership into an alliance in China, this thinking is not mainstream and a quasi-alliance with Russia has more supporters than a formal one. Russia-China partnership is a defensive quasi-alliance, a new great power relationship that does not necessarily confront the US nor replace US hegemony, but that looks for a more balanced relationship with the West. (Zhang, 2012) In this sense, China "[…] feels compelled by perceived strategic pressures generated by a change in the structure of the international system […] represented by America's so called pivot to Asia." (Zhang, 2012:130) Accordingly, only a 'strategical mistake' by the West could facilitate a Russia-China alliance. (Chen, 2014)

Beijing scholar Ding Xiaoxing, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, considers that "the Russia-China relationship is based on political and security issues, unlike other great power relationships." (Interview 13) There is much space for improving relations, particularly in the economic sphere; nevertheless, the coinciding of both countries' security issues is the basis of the relationship, and it is argued that for a long term relationship it should be kept as the basis. Pressure from the US did accelerate the Sino-Russian rapprochement; nevertheless, the partnership is not casual but was a strategic choice made by the two countries. Vladimir Potryakov notes that "Russia and China strive to influence the whole world, and the international structure and in this regard the partnership, is beneficial. Russia and China have constructed a truly strategic partnership." (Interview 2)

According to Ding Xiaoxing, "both countries had a decades-long political, military and ideological confrontation, however, and have only recently started to cooperate closely, thus, a certain level of distrust remains. Indeed, distrust is part of any great power relationship." (Interview 13)

Russia is often portrayed in the West as a declining power in economic, political, and military terms. Accordingly, the country would be unable to construct a more or less equal great power relationship with the rising China. This thesis argues that in comparison to the Soviet Union's power, Russia's power did decline, but compared to that power from the 1990s it has made significant progress in political, military and economic fields. Thus, Russia cannot be labelled a declining power, but a global power whose might in practically all spheres dramatically decreased, but has notably grown in the last decade. In the strict sense Russia, could be termed a re-rising power. Arguably, there is a general balance of power between Russia and China. It could be said that in the military, diplomatic and space spheres, Russia retains superiority over China, and despite the fact that the balance of power in this realm is likely to move in China's favour, Russia's superiority may help to keep a balance. There is a danger of friction, however, and this will depend to a large extent on Russia's relative balance of power.

Russia's relationship with China should not be viewed only within the matrix of multipolarity and geopolitical counterbalance to the United States but also within the context of Russia's self-conception as a great power. The strategic partnership with China

is essential in Russia's great power aspirations as it enables the country to challenge the US-led international order and to become a centre of power in Eurasia. Thus, one of the main goals of Russia in partnering with China is to transform the international order and to become one of the centres of power in the new world arena.

The result of this attempt is unknown, and if Russia weakens vis-à-vis China, Russia's pursuit of a multipolar world could only help the emergence of a bipolar system - a bipolar order between China and the US. It seems crucial for Russia's aspirations to maintain more or less balanced relations with China. The gap between national economies is only likely to widen whereas the gaps in other fields in which Russia has an advantage are likely to reduce. Global factors, as well as Russia's and China's internal factors, will determine whether Russia can maintain comprehensive power vis-à-vis China or whether the balance of power will move completely into China's favour.

5.2.2. Economic

Economic ties are not a strength of the Russia-China strategic partnership, nevertheless, during the last decade bilateral cooperation in the economic sphere has constantly increased. China became Russia's main economic partner in 2010. Russia's ten largest trade partners in 2013 were: China, with whom total trade amounted $88.8 billion, the Netherlands $75.9 billion, Germany $74.9 billion, Italy $53.8 billion, Japan $33.2 billion, Turkey $32.7 billion, Poland $27.9 billion, United States $27.7 billion, South Korea $25.2 billion, and France $22.2 billion. (Sinyakova, 2014)

In general, Russia-China economic interaction is growing and both benefit from the increasing bilateral trade. It is often emphasised by the elite that the economies complement each other. From 2000 to 2014 bilateral trade has increased more than 15 times, from $5.72 billion to $95.3 billion. China and Russia has agreed to boost the trade level to $100 billion in 2015 and to $200 billion by 2020. (Ostrow, 2013) This positive dynamics, however, failed to prevent Russia–China trade from declining to $68 billion in 2015. (RIAC, 2016) In 2014, Russia ranked ninth among China's trade partners, behind the United States whose total trade with China was $557.7 billion, Hong Kong $376.1 billion, Japan $312.6 billion, South Korea $290.3 billion, Taiwan $198.5 billion, Germany $177.7 billion, Australia

$137.1 billion, and Malaysia $102 billion; but ahead of Brazil $86.8 billion, and Vietnam $83.5 billion. (Data from RIAC, 2015a)

Russia's exports to China have increased in the last 10 years, from $12 billion in 2004, to $27 billion in 2010, and to $41 billion in 2014. In the same manner, China's exports to Russia have grown, from $9 billion in 2004, to $29 billion in 2010, to $53 billion in 2014. It should be noted that Russia's share in China's turnover has shown a small increase, however, from 1.8 percent in 2003 to 2.2 percent in 2014. In turn, China's share in Russia's turnover increased from 8.2 percent in 2003 to 10.5 percent in 2014. (Data from RIAC, 2015a) As can be seen, in spite of the continuous growth of bilateral trade in the last ten years, the role of both countries in each other's trade is rather low, particularly that of Russia in China's foreign trade.

Of the total value of China's exports to Russia in 2003, 17 percent were machinery and equipment, 5 percent chemicals, 21 percent clothing, 2 percent ferrous metals, 3 percent textiles, 9 percent footwear, and leather products accounted for 16 percent of the total. In comparison, in 2008 of the total exports to Russia, 36 percent were machinery and equipment, 7 percent chemicals, 16 percent clothing, 2 percent ferrous metals, 2 percent textiles, 5 percent footwear, and furniture accounted for 3 percent of the total value. From the total value of China's exports to Russia in 2013, 38 percent of the total exports was machinery and equipment, 8 percent chemicals, 13 percent clothing, 3 percent ferrous metals, 3 percent textiles, 3 percent footwear. (Data from RIAC, 2015a)

In comparison, of the Russian exports to China in 2003, 21 percent of the total exports were mineral fuel, oil and petrochemicals, 10 percent wood and wood products, 19 percent ferrous metals, 12 percent machinery and equipment, 6 percent non-ferrous metals, chemical 8 percent, and 7 fertilisers. In 2008, mineral fuel, oil and petrochemicals accounted for 50 percent of the total Russian exports to China, 12 percent wood and wood products, 2 percent ferrous metals, 2 percent machinery and equipment, 5 percent non-ferrous metals, chemical 6 percent, 7 percent fertilisers, and 5 percent seafood. Of the total value of Russia's exports to China in 2013, 69 percent of the total exports were mineral fuel, oil and petrochemicals, 8 percent wood and wood products, 1 percent ferrous metals, machinery and equipment less that 1 percent, 4 percent non-ferrous metals, chemical 4

percent, 3 percent fertilisers, and ores, fine coal and ash were 5 percent. (Data from RIAC, 2015a)

The structure of the Russo-Chinese economic relationship reflects the role of the two countries in the world economy. Exports from Russia to China are mainly raw materials, particularly hydrocarbons. Exports of machinery and ferrous metals have drastically decreased. Russia's main imports from China are machinery, electronics and clothing. As a matter of fact, the share of oil and oil products in imports to China has drastically increased; meanwhile Russia's exports of high tech and machinery have dramatically decreased to less than one percent. In contrast, the share of Russia's imports of machinery and equipment from China grew to almost 40 percent. In the short term this pattern is likely to continue. This would be corrected only by the re-industrialisation and modernisation of the Russian economy. (Portyakov, 2013)

It should be noted that the economic relationship is becoming more unequal in terms of GDP, and the roles of both countries have reverted. At the end of Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the 1970s, China's GDP was estimated to be 40 percent of that of the Russian Socialist Republic. Nowadays, China's GDP is four times bigger than Russia's. (Trenin, 2013a) This growing asymmetry causes some concern in Russia and it "is a factor in some way hindering a closer union of the two countries." (Portyakov, 2013)

Russia as one of the world's leading energy exporters is a logical partner for China, as it is one of the largest energy importer nations in the world. Thus, as in for European countries, energy is the most important field of economic cooperation for Russia and China. China's natural gas consumption has continuously increased, and from 2007 the country became a net natural gas importer. Cooperation between China and Russia in this field was very limited, however, and remained at a very low level. In the last years Russia's share in China's total gas imports was less than 2 percent. A breakthrough occurred in May 2014 when after ten years of negotiations, a gas deal between China and Russia was signed in Shanghai by Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). The signing of the deal is considered a milestone in the Sino-Russia relationship and a breakthrough in Russia's turn to Asia. "The deal is notable not only for its size and duration but for its timing. Ten years of negotiations were finally concluded at a sensitive juncture for Russia,

as it faces the threat of tougher sanctions over its handling of the Ukraine crisis." (Koch, 2014)

China's crude oil imports depend to a great extent on oil from the Middle East. Oil imports skyrocketed in 2014, increasing by 40 percent. The share of Russia in China's crude oil imports in 2014 was 11 percent, behind Saudi Arabia whose total exports to China accounted 16 percent of the country's oil imports, and Angola 13 percent; but ahead of Oman 10 percent, Iraq 9 percent, and Iran 9 percent. (Data from EIA, 2015a) Russia's oil exports to China have more than doubled in the last five years and continue to grow, indeed it is expected that Russia's oil exports to China will equal those of Saudi Arabia to China (Paik, 2015) As a matter of fact, in May 2015 Russia overtook Saudi Arabia as the largest supplier of oil to China for the first time.

In addition to cooperation in the field of oil and natural gas; Russia is planning to increase the level of exports of coal, electricity and nuclear energy.

Apart from energy, Russo-Chinese cooperation has developed in other fields in recent years. According to the joint statement signed in Shanghai in May 2014 by Presidents Putin and Xi, the two sides agreed to take new measures to improve and expand economic cooperation. Similarly, both countries agreed to strengthen macroeconomic exchanges to reach $200 billion in bilateral trade volume in 2020.

Similarly, in 2014, both countries agreed for the first time to develop joint projects of highly finished products and to improve cooperation in high-tech fields, nuclear energy, aviation, and space industry. A joint project for a long-range passenger aircraft designed to compete with Boeing and Airbus is being developed and there are plans for the plane's joint production. In May 2015, Russia and China signed a deal for the creation of a platform to promote the Russian Sukhol Superjet 100 passenger jet to Asian markets and it is expected that 100 aircraft will be delivered to China and other countries within three years. (Sputnik, 2015b) Both countries have also attempted to develop cooperation in innovation, such as further integration between the GLONASS and BeiDou navigation systems. Russia and China believe "that increasing the share of high-tech production in their exports can resolve the dilemmas of their development models. For Russia, this implies overcoming its current dependency on the extensive exports of natural resources

and for China its reliance on polluting and labor-intensive manufacturing." (Smirnova, 2015)

Russia and China have agreed to develop joint projects in the fields of pharmaceutics, medical equipment, chemicals, timber processing, shipbuilding, transportation, machinery manufacturing and agriculture. Similarly, both sides call for more balanced economic cooperation, and a more diversified structure, and to improve cooperation in forestry, agriculture, aviation manufacturing, advanced technologies, environmental protection, and cross-border transport, and for the development of joint projects. (President of Russia, 2015) The ongoing and new bilateral projects cannot be compared to those of the 1950s, however, and many fields remain underdeveloped. (Karaganov, 2013)

In the summit meeting between Presidents Putin and Xi in 2015, a major focus was on boosting economic cooperation. Indeed, 93 percent of the bilateral agreements were related to the economy. What is more, only 24 percent of these agreements were energy related whereas 38 percent were in the areas of finance, banking and investment. (Smirnova, 2015) This reflects an effort not only to increase economic cooperation but to broaden bilateral economic ties and to develop other fields in which cooperation is still low, such as the financial sphere.

It is argued that one of the major drivers for deepening economic ties is the banking, finance and investment sphere, and therefore both countries have given high-priority to this field, following a goal to increase the bilateral trade volume to $200 billion by 2020. In this regard, Russia and China agreed in May 2015, through the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and CITIC Merchant, to set up the Bilateral Investment Bank. Both sides are also planning to develop a joint investment fund that would operate alongside the aforementioned bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The CEO of the RDIF stated: "We believe the Russia-China Investment Bank's services will be in high demand across both nations. The bank will also act as a driver for fostering further investment cooperation in both countries." (Lotto, 2015)

Russia and China are making efforts to reduce their dependence on the dollar by using their national currencies in trade operations, interbank cooperation and to finance joint projects. The Central Bank of Russia and the People's Bank of China signed an

agreement to use the rouble and yuan in international payments. President Putin noted in May 2015 that 7 percent of the total volume of trade was already made in their national currencies and urged an increase in financial cooperation. He said: "We will continue to develop cooperation in our financial sectors, including through broader use of the rouble and yuan in mutual settlements." (President of Russia, 2015)

Arms sales are quite a successful area of cooperation for Russia. Russia's military exports to China constitute a very important part of the security relationship as well. China's military has acquired advanced weapons and technologies that it was unable to produce. There are still several issues, however, as Russia is concerned about selling its most advanced weapons to a large and dynamic country that could pose a potential geopolitical threat. China complains that Russia does not want to share its highest technology; some of which it does share with other countries such as India. Similarly, there are concerns in Russia regarding intellectual property and China copying Russian weapon designs.

One of the most important fields for bilateral cooperation is space. Indeed, one of the main elements of Russia's new space strategy is the construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome. This could open the way for strategic cooperation in this sphere. The location is symbolic, as 'the placement of a major strategic infrastructure asset like Vostochny so close to the Chinese border illustrates the high level of comfort and security that Russia feels toward China." (Korybko, 2015) In the words of Zhao Huasheng: "China is not the main partner of Russia in space cooperation, but it is one of the most prominent fields for bilateral collaboration." (Interview 10)

Since the outbreak of the conflict in the Ukraine, space exploration is practically the only field where Russia-US cooperation remains unaltered, however, when NASA expressed its intention to prolong the life of the International Space Station by four years to 2024 (the projects was due to expire in 2020), Russia stated that it was considering leaving the program by 2020, and would stop financing it. Putin even implied Russia's intentions to build its own space station after 2020, and it was said that Russia was considering building a new space station jointly with China. In May 2015 Russia formally committed to operating and financing ISS until 2024, however. By the same token, Roscosmos and NASA announced their plans to develop a new space station following the retirement of the

ISS. China seems reluctant to develop a new orbiting station jointly with the United States and it is considering launching its own space station. Both countries have revealed that are collaborating on space projects and are taking the first steps towards cooperation beyond low-Earth orbits. Russia has said it is interested in China as the main partner for a lunar scientific station and it is contemplating the long term possibility of realising a joint manned mission to the Moon, and even Mars.

Arguably, economic ties are the weakest link in the bilateral relationship, playing a minor role, and this is expected to continue. Economic cooperation is still low but it is likely to increase. According to Xing Zhang: "Given the existing impediments and difficulties, however, the relationship is possibly not desirable, but is acceptable." (Interview 10) It could be said that Russia and China are not very effective partners in the economic dimension. They are more effective in global and regional politics where they have similar interests and common approaches. That is why the focus of the bilateral relationship is generally on that area. (Larin, 2011)

5.3. Regional Level

5.3.1. Security and Political Issues

As described in Chapter Four, one of the major concerns of the Russian leadership constitutes the negative demographic trends in the RFE, particularly in contrast to those regions in Northeast Asia, and particularly China. The growing economic and demographic asymmetry between the densely populated regions in Northeast China and the sparsely populated Russian Far East prompts serious concerns in Russia. The issue has been acknowledged by the Russian government. President Putin even stated that "If in the short term we do not undertake real efforts to develop the Russian Far East, then, in a few decades the Russian population will be speaking Japanese, Chinese, and Korean." (Bolt, 2010:205)

The RFE accounts for one third of the country's territory, 6.2 million square kilometres, and it is inhabited by only 6.2 million people, resulting in a population density of one person per square kilometre. Indeed, if it was an independent country, the RFE

would be the least populated country in the world. In contrast, Northeast China - Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia provinces -has a population of 133 million and a population density of 67.2 persons per square kilometre.

The population density of Russia's Far Eastern provinces is: Amur Oblast, 2.2 persons per square kilometre; Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, 0.07/km2; Jewish Autonomous Oblast, 4.3/km2; Kamchatka Krai, 0.68/km2; Khabarovsk Krai, 1.7/km2; Magadan Oblast, 0.34/km2; Primorsky Krai, 11.7/km2; Sakha Republic, 0.31/km2; and Sakhalin Oblast, 5.72/km2. In contrast, the population density of China's Northeastern provinces is: Heilongjiang, 86.4 persons per square kilometre; Jilin, 149/km2; Inner Mongolia, 21.4/km2; and Liaoning, 299/km2. By comparing the population density of the RFE, 1 person per square kilometre, and the population density of China's Northeastern provinces, 67 persons per square kilometre, the result is that Northeast China's population density is about sixty seven times higher than that of RFE. This takes into account the large and extremely low populated entities in the north of Russia: Sakha Republic, Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, and Kamchatka Krai. These regions have a notable low population density and are located in the very far north and far from China. This thesis argues that it is more accurate when comparing the population density of the RFE with that of Northeast China to take into consideration only neighbouring regions, this is: Amur Oblast, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Khabarovsk Krai, Primorsky Krai, and Zabaikalsky Krai in Russia; Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Inner Mongolia provinces in China. In this case, the population density of Northeast China compared to that in the RFE is only 17 times higher. Thus, when comparing only bordering regions, the results are considerably different to those when comparing all China's Northeastern provinces with the whole RFE.

The fact that too few Russians and too many Chinese were living along the Russia-China border began to receive attention following the collapse of the Soviet Union amid the massive out migration from Siberia and the RFE to European Russia. The idea of many potential Chinese migrants coming to settle in Russia and the eventual takeover of a rising China over the underpopulated rich-resource region began to spread in the West and in Russia as well. Russians began to believe thousands of Chinese migrants were entering Russia every day.

The low population density of the RFE compared to that of Northeast China does not actually mean the Chinese are taking the RFE over. "The natural population imbalance is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for migration." (Korolev, 2015) It should be noted that this population imbalance along the Russian-Chinese border has existed since Russia expanded into the Pacific in the seventeenth century. Moreover, in most of the last four centuries the population imbalance was much greater than it is now.

As mentioned above, the number of Chinese citizens living in the RFE and Chinese migrants entering Russia every year through the RFE has been a source of concern. There is no consensus about the size of the Chinese migrant presence in Russia. According to the Russian Federal Statistics Service, (ROSSTAT, 2010) there were 28 thousand Chinese living in Russia, half of them in the RFE. According to some estimations, there are between 200,000 and 400,000 Chinese migrants entering to Russia annually, however, most are temporary workers that return to China after their stay in Russia. (Larin, 2011) As Andrey Ostrovskiy notes: "There is a wide consensus among Russian experts that the number of Chinese citizens living and entering Russia has been overestimated and there is no Chinese expansion into the RFE". (Interview 1) Indeed, more Chinese citizens lived in Russia before the Revolution than now. (Valdai, 2012) Officially, among NEA countries, Koreans and not Chinese are the major ethnic group in the RFE. In 2010 there were more Koreans than Chinese citizens living in Khabarovsk Krai, Primorsky Oblast, Sakha Republic, Magadan Oblast, Sakhalin Oblast, Amur Oblast, and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. (Data from ROSSTAT, 2010)

Population trends in China have been gradually decreasing, in fact, China's total fertility rate (TRD) crossed the 2.1 replacement rate in the 1990s and it is now around 1.6 births per female. This has led some experts in Russia to call China's demographic expansionism into question, as China "will need its working population at home in years to come." (Korolev, 2015) Zhao Huasheng is representative of a faction of Chinese scholars that downplays the 'Chinese threat' of immigration by placing the relatively small-scale migration trend. (Interview 9) Specialist Ding Xiaoxing from China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, goes one step further, suggesting that "the current economic and demographic trends in Northeast China are already reversing the northward flow of Chinese workers into Russian territories." (Interview 13) According to the scholar:

> the Russian Far East is not an attractive place for us to live; it is a cold and isolated place. Our migrant workers come back to China after their stay in the RFE and do not stay there. What is more, people in China do not want to live even in the northeastern part of our country where climate conditions are similar to that in Russia's bordering regions. (Interview 13)

From the interviews taken with Chinese scholars it could be said that the issue is often exaggerated and that illegal migrants actually stay in Russia only for a short period and then return. (Interview 1, Interview 9, Interview 10, Interview 11, Interview 12, Interview 13)

Indeed, not only are Chinese migrants not coming to the RFE but there is a pattern of internal migration from China's north-eastern provinces southwards. In the period 1990-1995, two of the three north-eastern provinces in China, Heilongjiang and Jilin, had a net out-migration of residents, 389,000 and 145,000 respectively. Over the period 2000-2005 the three provinces, Heilongjiang, Jilin and Inner Mongolia, had a net out-migration of 825,000, 315,000, and 23,000 respectively. As a matter of fact, in the period 1990-2005, the three provinces had a net out-migration of 2,590,000. (Data from Chan, 2013) In the opinion of a Russian expert, "[...] the Chinese government is having problems keeping its population from moving south. They are having the same problems of people leaving their northern territories as we are having with the Far East." (Korolev, 2015)

Speculation regarding a massive inflow of Chinese migrants moving to Asiatic Russia has lead many in Russia to view the relationship with China more as a challenge than as an opportunity. This disappears when it comes to international affairs. President Putin stated that China's aspirations were not aimed at the natural resources of adjacent territories but at global leadership, and in this sense, Russia is not a competitor. Putin believes that the West uses this threat to try to scare Russia, but Russia looks for its own guaranties concerning China. For Russia, China is a reliable partner. In fact, China does "almost everything to placate Russian concerns." (Karaganov, 2013b) The Chinese leadership does not believe that China poses a threat to Russia. They are aware of the idea of a 'Chinese Threat' among some Russians, and although they recognise that the view is not mainstream, they believe it has a negative impact on the bilateral relationship and hinders the ongoing trust-building process between the two nations.

The large demographic asymmetry in bordering areas between the two countries will remain a 'minus' for Russia in the foreseeable future. (Portyakov, 2013) Arguably even this 'little minus' is taken seriously by the Russian government. In fact, the Eastern Military District has one of the highest rates of rearmament in Russia. It is the largest force in the Russian Armed Forces and a considerable proportion of new weapons goes to this region. More than 50 percent of military equipment was renovated in 2012. The precautions taken seem to be associated with potential threats coming from China. "Clearly, all precautions taken by Russia are associated not with a direct but potential threat to its interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity that may come from China. And yet, even a potential Chinese threat is a significant factor in Russia's foreign and defense policy." (Kashin, 2013)

It is argued that it would be almost impossible for Russia to defend Siberia and the RFE from Chinese aggression without the large-scale use of nuclear weapons. (Kashin, 2013) In the case of a non-nuclear conflict the chances of success are considerably low, as Russia's capabilities in the region cannot compare with those of China. There are only three main routes that could be cut off easily. Consequently, without the use of nuclear weapons, the best that could be done would be to repulse a provocation similar to that in 1969. (Kashin, 2013) The logic in Soviet times was to maintain a large military force that outmatched that of China, and the necessity to keep large numbers of troops in Siberia and the RFE was emphasised. Some in Russia argue that this was one of the main reasons for the economic overload in the Soviet Union that led to its collapse.

The China factor plays a very important role in Russia's nuclear policy in Asia, as Russia's defence capabilities with regard to China are based on nuclear weapons. Russia's nuclear deterrent against China seems to be an essential balance for the partnership. This can probably partly explain why Russia declines any further cuts in nuclear arsenals and also their reticence to disclose the composition of its tactical nuclear weapons. (Kashin, 2013)

According to Zhao Huasheng, "China is gradually paying more attention to the RFE as it is essential for China to have a secure and peaceful northern border." (Interview 9) China has several security concerns on its eastern, southern, and western borders, and thus, to have a secure border with its largest neighbour permits China to focus on other regions

that are much more problematic and move the necessary resources there. Indeed, "China's peaceful development of peaceful rise requires a favorable external environment, and first of all a long-term stable environment in the surrounding areas, and Russia is the biggest neighboring country." (Xiaoquan, 2005:78)

With its fast development, China's energy and other natural resources do not satisfy its modernisation. It has to guarantee the supply of these resources, and so it becomes a security issue. In the words of the Fudan University scholar, "the abundant reserves of Siberia and the RFE are the closest and the safest to China, thus, supply from Russia is the key to securing and diversifying their supply of energy and other natural resources." (Interview 9)

It is often argued that one of the potential conflicts between Russia and China could be over Central Asia, a region where the interests of both countries may overlap, particularly between two potential competing strategic projects: China's initiated New Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russian-led Economic Eurasian Union. Putin has suggested that Russia's foreign policy priority is the consolidation of the recently created Eurasian Economic Union, along with Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kirghizstan. This project is in line with Russia's ambitions to become a Eurasian power. In 2013 President Xi revealed China's plan to create a New Silk Road Economic Belt to link the peoples of Eurasia through joint development projects among different countries within the metacontinent. At first, the project looked vague and more like a beautiful historical allusion (Denisov, 2015), however, China has unveiled the principles, framework, cooperation priorities and mechanisms of the project. China's endeavour represents a change in the country's foreign policy from that of a medium sized player to that of a global player.

From the beginning, potential confrontation between these key projects has been highlighted. Russia considers Central Asia its natural sphere of influence, as most countries of the region were part of the Russian nation for almost two centuries. Furthermore, Central Asia is crucial in Russia's foreign policy, and the loss of these countries to China, another power in the immediate neighbourhood, would not only put an end to the Russian Eurasian project but to the country's great power aspirations. The Silk Road Economic Belt began to be seen in Russia as China's attempt to form a belt of countries in Eurasia loyal to China

and to expand its sphere of influence to the former-Soviet Central Asian states, and thus it became a major concern for the Russian leadership.

China believes that the Silk Road Economic Belt project is not directed against Russia, or to form a new sphere of influence, but is to stimulate the development of the country's western regions and to develop economic ties and transport corridors with countries in Eurasia. China rejects Russia's position that the region is inherently part of Russia's sphere of influence. (RIAC, 2015a:12) The situation thus began to be seen as a potential Cold War-style conflict between China and Russia. The issue was finally addressed by the leaders of both countries in May 2015. In a joint statement Presidents Putin and Xi pledged their intention to coordinate both strategic projects. Putin said: "We think that the Eurasian Integration project and the Silk Road Economic Belt project complement each other very harmoniously […] Essentially, we seek ultimately to reach a new level of partnership that will create a common economic space across the entire Eurasian continent." (President of Russia, 2015) Similarly, President Xi declared that: "We will pay particular attention to finding common ground in China's development of the Silk Road Economic Belt, Russia's efforts to build trans-Eurasian transport links and the Eurasian Economic Union integration project." (President of Russia, 2015)

According to a Zhao Huasheng, "Russia and China are often portrayed as natural competitors in the region, however, for the time being the interests of both countries in regional stability and economic development outweigh potential frictions in the region." (Interview 9) Nevertheless, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt have several conceptual differences, and their views are quite different, therefore it seems imperative to coordinate both projects and to reach a compromise on the basis of mutual concessions. (RIAC, 2015a) Central Asia is a region where both countries have competing interests, however, the first steps have already been taken as Russia and China have agreed to coordinate their key projects. To avoid a Cold War-style confrontation, China and Russia should be aware of each other's security and economic interests in the region and try not to challenge them directly. The region is between two great powers and the only way to avoid a zero-sum game is to reconcile each other's interests and to make attempts to coordinate both projects.

The future of the Russia-China relationship in the long-term remains rather uncertain. In this regard, western, and even some Russian, scholars argue that Russia will sooner or later have to choose between China and the West. (Savostyanov, 2009) It seems that both sides understand the numerous challenges that the Russia-China strategic partnership may face in the long term and the negative consequences of a confrontation between the two. Russia and China are therefore taking all possible measures to avoid such scenarios in the future. Both countries are aware of the serious consequences of a potential conflict and try to avoid that scenario by creating binding ties between them. (Kashin, 2013)

5.3.2. Economic Issues

The main field of Russia-China cooperation in Siberia and the Russian Far East is energy. Chinese aspirations to diversify and secure its energy sources are matched by Russia's national strategy to diversify its energy exports. For China it is imperative to improve its energy security and for Russia to exploit new markets in East Asia.

The gas contract signed with a value of $400 billion in May 2014 can be considered a breakthrough in Russia-China economic relations in general, and for the joint development of the RFE and northeast China. The deal involves the supply of up to 1.031 trillion cubic meters of gas to China in 30 years, beginning in 2018. In the words of Putin, it is the biggest contract for energy in the history of Russia and the USSR. Russia will supply 38 billion cubic meters of gas per year, although deliveries could increase up 50-55 billion cubic meters per year. The main resource bases will be Chayanda field in Sakha Republic, and Kovyktinsky in Irkust Oblast. The contract's value included the construction of a 4000km long pipeline called "Power of Siberia" to transport the gas across Eastern Siberia. The pipeline is said to cost $70 billion. Apart from the pipeline, drop-off points on the border with China, and a helium processing plant will be built. (RT, 2014)

There has been secrecy regarding the price. As many analysts point out, it is likely that the deal involved a more favourable price for China. (Lain, 2014) China will be paying around $350 per thousand cubic meters of gas, which is a bit less than the $380 price at

which Gazprom sells natural gas to Europe. To some this is a high price to pay for a pipeline, for others it is an opportunity to develop this historically neglected part of Russia. The forecast for revenue from the contract is about eight times higher than the expected investment. This would mean that "[…] all the talk about the fact that the project was originally unprofitable for Russia and Gazprom, poorly corresponds with reality." (Gryvach, 2014)

It could be argued that the gas deal makes Russia more dependent on China, but it could also be said that China is becoming more dependent on Russia as well. (Maslov, 2014) The natural gas deal is a win-win solution for China and Russia. Russia reduces its dependence on European markets and strengthens its position against Western sanctions. Moreover, the development of the gas potential of Eastern Siberia and the Far East could accelerate the socio-economic development of these areas. China is the biggest market, but there are other markets where there is great potential for growth, such as Japan or South Korea, where the share of gas in their development is still low, 21 and 16 percent respectively. (Maslov, 2014)

For China, against the background of the US pivot to the Asia-Pacific, cultivating a China-Russia energy community has significant strategic effects. It takes at least two to three weeks to deliver oil from the Middle East to China, but only three to five days from Siberia, and land pipeline transport is more convenient and safer than maritime transport. Confronted with a serious energy security situation, China should seize the opportunity to close deals with Russia. (Shoujun, 2013)

The long-term provision of natural gas is extremely important for the energy balance as well as the sustainable development of the China's north-eastern regions. The severe environmental problems of using coal are forcing China to gradually cut coal-burning power plants and switch to gas, particularly in the northeast. Currently, Northeast China is cut off from the unified East-West gas transportation system, running from major fields in the west to markets in the east. In fact, the level of use of gas on average in the northeast is 2 percent, and the share of coal varies from 56 to 89 percent. (Gryvach, 2014) The transport infrastructure in China will go from the border to Hebei province, Beijing, and Tianjin. The estimated investment is said to be 15-20 billion.

The construction and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure will probably stimulate the development of the RFE and Northeast China. Thus, the gas deal for Russia is beneficial from the perspective of the development of the Far East. In like manner, Russia and China have agreed on a western supply route for the gas; this is the construction of a gas pipeline capable of transporting 30 billion cubic meters of gas annually from West Siberia via the Altai region to China. (Paik, 2015) The Altai route is expected to start work by 2022. It is worth mentioning that China is not fully replacing Europe as Russia's most significant energy partner. Even if Russia exports 55 billion cubic meters to China, it would still be no more than what Russia sent to Europe in 2013, 161.5 billion cubic meters. (Lain, 2014)

In 2013 an agreement for oil imports between Russia and China was extended. The ESPO was complemented by China's offer of a 25 billion loan to Russia's oil companies Rosneft and Transneft. In 2013, Russia sold 15.7 million tons of oil to China, and it is planning to increase this to 30 million in 2018. (Romanova, 2014) Similarly, Rosneft agreed to triple its oil exports to China from 300,000 barrels per day to as much as one million, to almost equal the oil exports to China from Saudi Arabia. (Paik, 2015)

Another breakthrough in energy came in 2014, when Rosneft and CNPC signed a framework agreement for the purchase of a 10 percent stake in Russia's oil-rich Vankor field by the Chinese company. As a matter of fact, this is the first time Russia has made that kind of offer of a strategic asset to another country. (ROSNEFT, 2014)

The importance of developing interregional trade has been emphasised by both countries. Although it has grown in recent years, interregional trade is slowly developing and accounts only for 15 percent of the bilateral trade. The share of China in the RFE's imports grew from 22 percent in 2006 to 45 percent in 2014. In contrast, the share of China in the RFE's exports decreased from 37 percent in 2006 to 19 percent in 2014. Thus, the share of China in the overall external trade of the RFE passed from 30 percent in 2006 to 26 percent in 2014. (Korolev, 2015)

The main constraint in developing cross-border cooperation is the lack of transport infrastructure between border regions, and lack of coordination between development plans in the RFE and Northeast China. (RIAC, 2015a) One of the main issues is Russia's backward transport and logistic infrastructure in the RFE and East Siberia. To boost

interregional trade Russia's transport infrastructure has to be drastically improved. Similarly, transport links between the RFE and Northeast China are to be realised, such as a bridge over the Amur to connect border regions.

Similarly, it seems important to coordinate the development programmes of both the RFE and Northeast China. In 2009 the Programme of Cooperation between the Regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia and the Northeast of the People´s Republic of China 2009-2018 was approved.

> Viewed as a whole, the program list was designed to revitalize and diversify China's northeast industrial base, while accelerating exploitation of Russia's natural resources and facilitating flows of the extracted materials to China-what one study called a resource and transit-oriented economic model for eastern Russia. Analysis shows that more than 70 percent of the projects envisioned on the Russian side, covering minerals extraction, agriculture, and forestry, have a clear resource focus, compared to about 5 percent on the Chinese side; on the other hand, roughly 90 percent of the Chinese projects outlined in the program involve a broad range of industrial processing and manufacturing sectors. This is a China oriented development strategy. It provokes serious concerns in Russia of being a colonial appendage to China with serious economic and political implications. (Lee, 2012)

According to Victor Larin (2011) the programme of regional cooperation between Russia's Eastern Siberia and Far East and China's Northeast is more symbolic than real, but if modernised could trigger development. In this sense, in 2015 the Russian Direct Investment Fund and the government of Heilongjiang agreed to establish an investment fund for agricultural projects on both sides of the border and even considered creating an agricultural free trade zone between the Heilongjiang and Amur provinces. (Lotto, 2015)

Russia scholars urge the leadership to identify competitive advantages of the region, to evaluate the possible demand for certain goods from Siberia in China, and to find points and areas of complementarities and coincidences and work these lines. (Barabanov, 2012) Moscow scholar Igor Makarov for instance, argues that "water is one of the limitations to China's economic growth, and thus water-intensive-industries is a good opportunity niche for Russia." (Interview 5)

As the development of the region has become a national strategic priority for Russia, this provides space for regional cooperation between China and Russia. Similarly, it could be argued that participating in the development of the RFE is in the interest of China: meeting energy demands and resources, and a revival of industrial provinces in Northeast China and therefore China would like to see further economic cooperation with Russia in

the development of its northern provinces. "The positive interaction of Russia's eastern region development and the revival of northeast China will promote mutually beneficial cooperation in the two countries border areas." (Sha, 2014) Seemingly, the Chinese leadership and scholars understand the major role the country is likely to play in the development of Asiatic Russia. From the perspective of some Chinese scholars:

> China needs to play a significant role in the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. This requires foreign markets and the development of export oriented products. In this case, China is one of the most promising markets […] Furthermore, Siberia and the Russian Far East require stable investment, but the Russian government cannot currently invest all the resources needed for development. China possesses sufficient financial reserves, which it can use to develop and modernize Siberia and the Russian Far East. (RIAC, 2015a:16)

In this sense, the construction of the required infrastructure in Russia's eastern provinces requires a huge labour force that could allow god job opportunities for Chinese workers and China has an advantage in infrastructure construction. (Sha, 2014)

There are several barriers to economic cooperation, however. From the Chinese perspective these problems are "[…] the imbalanced trade structure, underdeveloped infrastructure in the region, the small size of firms in the region, Russia's customs procedures, Russia's neglect of Siberia, and Russian fears of Chinese involvement in the RFE." (Bolt, 2010:206) Indeed, as Ostrovskiy observes: "Chinese investors frequently complain about the lack of investment and opportunities, and particularly about the business environment in the RFE." (Interview 1) Nevertheless, according to a Vladivostok scholar, the Chinese say they do not invest in the RFE because of the business environment buy in reality they are not interested on that, they prefer to invest in Latin America or in Africa. (Interview 16)

As mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the main challenges Russia faces in engaging Northeast Asia, is that Russia is in Asia but it is not Asian. In the case of China, there are ambivalent attitudes of Chinese scholars towards Russia's 'shift' to Asia. For instance, Xin Zhang from East China Normal University believes that East Asia has become Russia's second foreign policy priority, only after Europe. (Interview 10) Beijing scholar Yi Jiang from the IRECASS, suspects that East Asia is not a top foreign policy priority for Russia, as the country thinks of itself as essentially European. "Russia's focus on Asia is above all rhetorical, there has not been a dramatic change in the attitudes of the Russian elite toward

Asia." (Interview 11) For him, "East Asia is only Russia's fourth priority after Europe, Central Asia, and North America." (Interview 11) In this sense, Lui Fenghua argues that Russian elites are "still Europeanised, they only talk about Russia's pivot to Asia, but nothing more." (Interview 12) Nevertheless, Yi Jiang believes the APEC summit is a landmark in Russia´s shift to Asia and considers that "the four points proposed in Vladivostok for the integration of Russia into the region are a good start." (Interview 11)

Russia's efforts to develop Siberia and the RFE, and to integrate the region into northeast Asia are seen from different perspectives in China. In this regard, Xin Zhang considers that "Russia is moving in the right way for development of its eastern region, however, it is an enormous endeavour that will take decades." (Interview 10) Some Chinese scholars consider that the lack of integration between Asiatic Russia and Northeast Asia might not be the business environment *per se* or structural issues but the fear of any integration process, however. In this sense, Yi Jiang argues that Russia is not really committed to integrating Asiatic Russia into Northeast Asia. (Interview 11) By the same token, Bejin scholar Liu Fenghua from IREECAS emphasises that Russia "fears any sort of integration of the RFE into Asia." According to him, "Russians do not want even to hear the word 'integration'." (Interview 12) Liu argues that "Russia fears any kind of integration because the country has not received enough benefit from the globalisation process. On the contrary, China supports the idea of integration as it has received tangible benefits from the globalisation process." (Interview 12) In this sense, China sees itself as open to the world, pro-market; in contrast, Russia is seen as more insular and nationalistic, especially in regards to trade. The Chinese scholar notes, however, that "Russia has to develop Siberia and the Russian Far East before any process of integration, otherwise, any process of integration would fail." (Interview 12)

It is frequently argued in Russia that China cannot be the main partner for developing Russia's eastern provinces. (Inozemtsev, 2012; Trenin, 2001) Many scholars in Russia see the danger of becoming a 'raw material appendage' of China by exporting energy resources and importing consumer and investment goods. (Karaganov, 2013b) It is often emphasised within the Russian elites that Asiatic Russia and the RFE in particular, cannot be too close to China, especially due to the growing economic asymmetry.

Nevertheless, as Moscow scholar Igor Makarov notes, it is utopian to think that anyone is acceptable except China for the projects of development in the RFE. According to him:

> The development of Siberia is impossible without China as a priority partner. China is now the main investor in the Russian Far East. I am not sure if its good, but it is the reality against this new political climate and the crisis between Russia and the West and consequently with Japan and Korea. Now it is maybe inevitable to base the development of the RFE on the relationship with China. (Interview 5)

It should be highlighted, however, that in 2011 China was only the main partner for the border provinces of the Russian Far East, but not for other provinces: South Korea was the main economic partner for Kamchatka, Sakhalin and Magadan; the US for Chukotka and Belgium for Sakha Republic. In these provinces non-Chinese still investment dominated. (Lee, 2012)

China plays a key role for the RFE; it has a special place in the economic strategy of the region. Following the crisis in Ukraine, Russia has moved closer to China and even has taken steps to allow the direct participation of China in the RFE by lifting restrictions on Chinese investments in the region. (Lukin, 2015) This gradual involvement could be seen as a natural step in the development of the strategic partnership following the crisis in the Ukraine.

In this situation, the question for Russia seems not to be partnership with China for the development of Russia's east, but how Russia can find a model to develop economic ties with China, along with political and security issues. Regional economic relations could become a new form of bilateral relations and give a boost to the overall economic ties. For Russia, China constitutes investment sources, labour supply and a huge market, however, the fear of economic sinicisation of the RFE constitutes the main impediment for developing ties with the Chinese. From the Russian perspective, China is both part of the solution and the problem.

It is often argued that if the RFE becomes a raw material appendage of China, Russia would become a junior partner of China. Fyodor Lukyanov (2015) argues that in fact Russia is a raw materials appendage of the European Union and it has not become its junior partner. He thus believes that this assessment is a purely subjective evaluation based on ideological considerations. "For some reasons, the same observers contend that for Russia to serve a raw materials appendage of the European Union brings development and

progress but that the same relationship with China will inevitable drag Russia into the abyss of backwardness." In this regard, Russia will always in some sense be a 'resource appendage' for other nations. Indeed, both China and Russia are to a certain extent dependent from one another. "China and Russia both suffer from the consequences of resource vulnerabilities, but Russia's fears of becoming China's resource appendage are more widely discussed." (Wishnick, 2016:11) Russian scholars 'securitise' economic relations with China whereas Chinese scholars 'desecuritise' by downplaying any threat and omitting mention of their own country's vulnerabilities and dependence on Russia.

Russia constantly securitises relations with China, in particular its economic relations. The issue, however, is not that Russia could become a resource supplier to China but the fact that giving privileged access to the Chinese to the RFE would exclude foreign investors, namely Japanese and Koreans. In fact, this situation can be seen now in the region, as noted by Makarov: "Japanese and Korean investors are reluctant to participate in regional projects because they cannot compete with the Chinese, their presence is too strong." (Interview 5)

5.3.3. The Arctic

The melting Arctic ice has in recent times pushed NEA countries to pay more attention to the region. China, Japan and South Korea joined the Arctic Council in 2013 as permanent observers. "Exploration of the Arctic Ocean, as well as some seaways, will have a profound impact on global geopolitical relationships and policies. Countries of Northeast Asia will have different strategies depending on their own benefits." (Xinhua, 2014c) The Chinese government has no particular strategy on the Arctic. Similarly, there is no official statement of policy or high level pronouncements on the Arctic. The region is neither a top foreign policy priority for China nor an immediate interest, but it is part of a long-term strategy. (Solli, 2013) "As with numerous other second-tier foreign policy issues, Beijing can be expected to persistently pursue recognition of its growing power which entitles it to be included in shaping the Arctic's future." (Jakobson, 2013) At the same time, Chinese scholars and scientists are gradually paying more attention to the area and suggesting

policies to the government. It could be said that "China's leaders still are in the early stages of developing an official policy toward the region." (Campbell, 2012:3)

China is a non-Arctic state working its way into a region in which it does not naturally belong. (Mered, 2013) It has no sovereignty over the NSR and its resources, but seeks a role in determining the political framework and legal basis for future activities in the Arctic. (Zolotukhin, 2013) China has maintained a low profile in Arctic issues, possibly so as not to cause alarm among Arctic states. Only a few voices within the country are pushing for more assertive policies of China in the Arctic, however, an assertive stance could possibly undermine its own interests.

At the Nuuk ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in 2011, the acceptance of new members to the Arctic Council as permanent observers was debated. It was established by the Council that permanent observers were obliged to respect the sovereignty of Arctic states and accept international law, particularly UNCLOS. Thus, China had to accept Arctic state jurisdiction and sovereignty over the Arctic in order to be accepted as permanent observer in 2013. Following its acceptance, China has reiterated that it recognises the jurisdiction of the Arctic States. As a Chinese specialist asserts, "China needs to make it clear to major Arctic players that as non-Arctic country it recognises Arctic nation's sovereignty and related rights in the area." (Baozhi, 2013) China should not try to influence permanent members or change the power structure.

However, China is concerned that Arctic states could change policies at any time to the detriment of non-Arctic states. China believes the Arctic is a "common heritage of mankind". The Chinese Ambassador to Norway said in 2013 that, "In spite of their regional nature, the Arctic issues also include trans-regional ones, such as climate change, maritime shipping and so on, which needed to be addressed with joint efforts of the international community." (Zhao in Solli, 2013:260) China's logic is that actions in the region have global effects and therefore non-Arctic states should be taken into account. This, and China's assertiveness in seas closer to it, has fuelled suspicion and generated concerns about the country's real intentions, and has led several analysts and officials to make inferences about this. As a result, China's bid to become a permanent observer was seen with suspicion by some members of the council, although none of them openly opposed its membership. Nonetheless, as Russian specialists point out, in spite of the fact that China's

position strengthened after it was granted the status of permanent observer, this should not be overestimated, "[…] the status does not give China more powers but requires it to respect sovereign rights of the Arctic states." (Lassin, 2014:23)

But, what are China's interests in the Arctic? According to a Russian specialist, "Chinese interests in the Arctic form a complex structure than in the first place stand out economically, including natural resources, transportation and logistics; secondly, geopolitical and military interests; and in third place ecological, climate, and other scientific interests and scientific applications." (Troyakova, 2013:12)

The melting ice in the Arctic will likely have profound effects on the country's climate; China is very susceptible to rising seas levels. Sometimes China is even more interested in the adverse effects of climate change in the Arctic than in the long-term economic benefits. (Solli, 2013) This is why China's activities are strongly focused on environmental issues; it participates actively in several research projects, especially on issues concerning the impact of the melting polar ice on the country's environment and economy. Arguably, China's immediate interest in the Arctic is research, not only about climate but geological and mineral extraction. In effect, China has one Arctic research station: the Arctic Yellow River Station on Svalbard Island, established in 2003. China also has a large ice breaker, the Xue Long, which rescued the Russian icebreaker Akademik Shokalskiy, which was stranded, and helped to extricate all the passengers and their belongings. We argue that scientific research also helps to legitimise China's claims in the Arctic as a non-Arctic state.

China is interested in the NSR across the northern coast of Russia. The Chinese economy is highly dependent on international shipping: 46 percent of China's GDP is shipping dependent. (Blunden, 2012) The country therefore sees the melting ice of the Arctic as an opportunity to use the NSR as an alternative route to transport goods in summer from Europe to Asia and vice versa. It is the shortest route for commercial shipping, particularly for the eastern ports. In 2013, the first Chinese merchant ship travelled to Europe via the NSR. The journey to Rotterdam was completed in 30 days, which is 12 or 15 days less than through the Suez Canal and the Malacca Strait. The trip from Shanghai to Hamburg via the NSR is 3455 nautical miles closer than via the Suez Canal and Malacca Strait. Secondly, it is a safer route. China is the largest consumer of

energy and it is vital to its interests to ensure safe transit of oil and gas, and the shortcut via NSR not only would diversify energy supplies to China but shipping via the Arctic would give it the ability to avoid dangerous choke points beset by maritime piracy, territorial disputes, and the growing militarisation of southeast Asia. "For China, it is momentous for transportation of resources, trade, and logistics. The Arctic route means there is no need to further advance to the hinterlands of the Far East and Siberia; it will be sufficient to build the necessary infrastructure in several ports along the Arctic Passage to promote large-scale multilateral cooperation." (Feng, 2013) Still, Chinese analysts show scepticism regarding the economic benefits of using the NSR, pointing out both the extreme and unpredictable weather conditions and the lack of modern infrastructure along the route.

China is also interested in resource development, and access to energy and mineral resources under the Arctic seabed. This is where many suspect China's real motives. To avoid conflict with the Arctic states, particularly with Russia and Canada, China continuously emphasises its recognition of the Arctic state's sovereignty and that it is seeking only to form a partnership with them. As the head of the Polar Research Institute of China stated, "[…] we insist that these resources are not ours, and China's partnership with Arctic countries in the sector will come naturally as it is part of the widening economic cooperation among countries in the context of globalisation." (Wang, 2013) In addition, it should be noted that nearly all the identified resources lie within the state borders or within the EEZ of the coastal states.

Currently, of the Arctic states, China is giving priority to cooperation with Iceland. China-Iceland cooperation in the Arctic is particularly active and both countries are gradually working more closely. Recently both countries signed a free trade agreement, and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation was granted a license to explore oil and gas resources in the Draki area. (Ningzhu, 2014) Similarly, Denmark is looking for closer cooperation with China, particularly in sectors such as mining, fishing and sea-route development. (Hui, 2013) Both countries have acknowledged China's legitimate interests in the Arctic.

Due to the extensive energy ties, strategic partnership, and Arctic policies, Russia could be one of the most promising partners for China in the Arctic, through "mutually advantageous cooperation". (Campbell, 2012) Cooperation between Russia and China in

the Arctic is mainly focused on the development of natural resources, particularly the development of energy resources. In 2014 CNPC bought a 20 percent stake in Russia's Yamal LNG project and agreed to purchase three metric tons annually from the project. Similarly, both countries are planning to develop projects in the Barents and Pechora seas. The China Petroleum Cooperation signed an agreement with Soucomflot to coordinate efforts to use the NSR and the shipping of hydrocarbons from Russia. Regarding the use of the NSR, Russia's expertise in terms of icebreakers is essential for China.

As a result of the crisis in the Ukraine, Russia's cooperation with the West in the Arctic has substantially diminished. Beyond the boycotts and cancelled meetings between Russia and the other Arctic states, western sanctions have negatively impacted the development of offshore projects in Russia's Arctic, projects for which international expertise is needed. As a matter of fact, "western sanctions were primarily directed on Arctic resource extraction, this is the equipment for the extraction of oil and gas in the Arctic harsh weather conditions." (Interview 5) As long as the crisis between Russia and the West continues, cooperation in the Arctic will remain at a low level. Russia partnership with China in the Arctic thus seems to be the most promising in the mid-term. "China presents itself not only as a potential customer of Russian Arctic resources, but it could also offer Russia what it needs in terms of capital and financial banking for the development of Russia's energy and transport infrastructure in the Arctic." (RIAC, 2015b)

China-Russia cooperation in the Arctic can thus strengthen the strategic partnership between both nations. As in Siberia and the RFE, the increasing presence of China in the Arctic creates some concern in Russia and may represent a future dilemma for Russia. China is concerned about the regulations that Russia could impose on vessels passing through the NSR, and particularly that it might demand high fees for passing through its coastal waters and for the use of ice breakers that in the end could substantially reduce the possible benefits of using the route. Similarly, China supports the principle of free navigation along the Arctic in contrast to the Russian position. China is wary that if Russia's claims to the UNCLOS are recognised, Russia would practically have the region under its control and therefore access to large areas of the Arctic could be highly restricted. "China negatively perceives Russia's attempts to prove their rights in accordance to the

UNCLOS." (Zolotukhin, 2013:21) The question would be whether China contested Russia's sovereignty over the NSR.

Russia is not surprised by the growing interests of China in the Arctic, as they are part of its global interests and would strengthen its economic and political position in the world. Thus, China is developing global interests but acting carefully in order not to spoil relations with other countries. (Zolotukhin, 2013:22) China's growing relations with Norway, Denmark, and Iceland are seen in by Russia as an example of the country's strategy to advance its global interests.

China sees the Arctic as an environmental zone and an arena for economic opportunities. "These interests are crosscutting and environmental preservation goes hand-in-hand with commercial interests." (Solli, 2013:268) As a permanent observer, "Beijing presumably hopes that it will, over time, have an impact on informal discussions that help shape decisions". (Jakobson, 2013) China is looking for economic opportunities and to influence decision-making in how the region is governed. Therefore, "As a country geographically outside the Arctic, China will have to strengthen its cooperation with the Arctic Council to actively and effectively participate in Arctic events, because the latter serves as the most important mechanism for Arctic governance." (Baozhi, 2013)

5.4. Conclusions

Russia and China see multipolarity as the foundation of the global system and one of their major goals in building a partnership is to increase the influence of both countries in regional and international affairs. As Alexander Sergunin notes, "Russia and China constantly challenge the Western-led status quo and try to elevate their status with the help of each other." (Interview 17) Russia–China strategic partnership has come close to the line that distinguishes partnership from a military and political alliance. Yet, it is highly unlikely that they will form any kind of alliance in the short-term as they believe that Cold War style alliances are outmoded. Both countries, particularly China want to remain independent and do not want to openly confront the West. In the long term the future of the relationship is much more uncertain, and managing a normal relationship is a challenge for both powers. (Bin, 2007) According to Portyakov, "The maintenance of these already

achieved sufficiently high level of bilateral contacts and their further development is not guaranteed a priori and cannot be implemented automatically." (Interview 2)

For Russia, the importance of the partnership with China is essential not only at the global level but also at the regional level. The high profile of the bilateral ties legitimises to a certain extent Russia's claims to Asian power. China remains central to Russia's Northeast Asia policy and the Russian leadership seems to agree on the need to keep China as a key partner. Nevertheless, to assert its Asian identity in the region, it seems necessary for Russia to develop relations with other states, particularly Japan and South Korea. Exclusive Chinese economic presence in the region would probably jeopardise Russia's sovereignty over its eastern provinces. This goes against Russia's strategy to become an Asian power and therefore to be recognized as a global great power. For Russia, it is essential that China does not have a hegemonic access to the RFE. In this sense, "Other Pacific states can actually reinforce Russian sovereignty while at the same time protecting their own security interests in Northeast Asia." (Lee, 2012)

Furthermore, resource driven economic cooperation with China aggravates Russian preocupation of dependence on resource exports and becoming a 'raw material appendage' of China. Consequently, Russia constantly securitizes relations with China, in particular regional economic relations. As seen above, Russian elites frequently describe further regional economic cooperation as a potential threat. As Natasha Kuhrt notes, "In the Russian Far East (RFE), Russia has securitized issues of migration and cross-border trade, highlighting the fact that a more populous China might eventually effect a peaceful takeover of the region by economic means alone." (Kuhrt, 2015:80)

In the long term, the viability of the Russia-China strategic partnership will depend to a great extent on whether Russia can successfully develop Siberia, and especially the RFE. The risks of regional cooperation with China might not be a massive invasion/incursion of Chinese citizens to the RFE, but the fact that an economic 'sinicisation' of the region could lead to a certain erosion of Russia's sovereignty and therefore decisive in that matters related to the region would not be decided in Russia, and according to Russia's natural interests, but more according to Chinese interests. (Lukin, 2015)

Relations between Asiatic Russia and China are not the principal determinant of Russia-China relations. Indeed, interaction and cooperation between Asiatic Russia and China reflect the state of the Russia-China Strategic Partnership, and at the same time influence it to a certain extent. This chapter argues that Russo-Chinese regional interactions are the barometer of the overall Russia-China relations.

Marlene Laruelle observes that in Asia China "presents itself as the main identity dilemma for Russia". (Laruelle, 2014) China simultaneously reinforces and potentially threathens Russia's greatpowerness. Thus, for Russia's great power ambitions in Northeast Asia, China appears to present both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, China in part legitimates Russia's claim to Asian power status as it develops regional economic ties and elevates its profile in the region. On the other hand, dependence on resource-driven cooperation with China specially after the crisis in Ukraine brings the region's security issues to the forefront. Indeed, without China's rise, the issue of sovereignty over the RFE might not be an issue at all. The more unequal the relationship grows in terms of the balance of power, the more fearful Russia will be of China's presence in its eastern provinces. In contrast, the more equal the relationship becomes, the more confident Russia will be in the relationship of its Asian region with China. It is difficult to envisage how the balance of power between these two nations will develop, but the analysis of relations at a regional level could serve to assess the actual state of the overall bilateral relations. Natasha Kuhrt synthetises the current state of the situation: "Both at the regional and global levels, China's economic performance implicitly challenges Russia's claim to be a great power, and the possibility that at some unknown point in the future this economic power might be translated into political power poses a threat to Russia." (Kuhrt, 2015:84)

We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all of you, our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable.

Emperor Hirohito of Japan

CHAPTER SIX

Russia-Japan

Russia-Japan relations have improved considerably in the last fifteen years, nevertheless, the ups and downs have been constant. Historically, the USSR/Russia and Japan have not enjoyed prolonged periods of stable friendly relations. In fact, the countries have entered into hostilities four times: 1905, 1918-1922, 1939, and 1945. The absence of a peace treaty, an unsolved territorial dispute, and the US-Japan military alliance has prevented both countries from upgrading the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. Still, economic ties have developed since the 1960s, particularly in Siberia and the RFE, and have shown a sharp increase in the last decade.

Russia's identity as an Asian power necessitates different partners and not only China in the Asia-Pacific region. Russian scholars frequently call for diversification of Russia's relations in Northeast Asia and to avoid a 'sinicisation' of the country's engagement in the region. Therefore, it is necessary for Russia to develop relations with other states and Japan emdodies an ideal option. Unlike with China, Russia does not securitise regional economic relations with Japan which the Russian elites do not see as a potential threat to Russia's great power identity. Indeed, as argued throughout this chapter, the national regional interests of Japan and Russia are not in direct conflict with each other but converge to a large extent. The territorial dispute is an important issue impeding closer ties, but it is not the most relevant one, and the focus on bilateral ties should not be centred on it.

In 2012 a new phase of Japan-Russia relations commenced. Prime Minister Abe has attempted to build close personal relations with President Putin. Abe and Putin's came to power succeeded in giving momentum to the countries' political and economic relations.

The current crisis between Russia and the West, however, has partially disrupted this project.

The chapter tries to explain the dynamics of Russia-Japan relations and how for Russia, a partnership with Japan remain essential for the development of Asiatic Russia and the balance of power and central to the country's great power ambitions in Northeast Asia. The US-Japan-Russia and Russia-China-Japan triangles play an important role in Russia-Japan relations, and arguably the more Japan sides with the US, the more Russia will move closer to China and vice-versa.

This chapter is organised as follows: (1), it briefly depicts the background of present Russia-Japan relations, (2), then the political and economic determinants of the bilateral ties are briefly reviewed, and (3), it focuses on the bilateral relations at regional level and the place of Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic within the overall Russia-Japan relations. Finally (4), the chapter concludes by reflecting upon the relevance of Siberia and the RFE in the future of Russian-Japanese relations.

6.1. Background

As it has been explained in Chapter Three, when the Russians reached the Pacific Ocean they were unaware of the existence of Japan. Only after exploring the Kamchatka Peninsula and the Kuril Islands in the first decades of the eighteenth century did the Russians realise that Japan lay to the south, at the end of the Kuril Islands chain. In 1739 the first vector of Bering's Great Northern Expedition, or the Second Kamchatka Expedition, set off from Kamchatka and reached the Japanese Island of Honshu, and was the first encounter between the civilisations. Until then, the Japanese also knew practically nothing about Russia. Indeed, it was only in 1763 that the Japanese got an idea of where Russia might be located. Despite sporadic contacts, Russo-Japanese communication could not be established until the mid-nineteenth century, following the arrival in Tokyo Bay of the US Commodore, which precipitated the end of Japan's feudal regime in 1853. Two years later, the Treaty of Shimoda (1855) between Russia and Japan signified the establishment of official relations between both countries, and the first attempt to delineate a border. It was agreed that the maritime border in the Kuril Islands would run between Iturup and Urup,

with Japan receiving Iturup and the three islands to the south and Russia receiving Urup and the rest of the islands to the north. There was no agreement on Sakhalin Island. (March, 1996:89) In 1875 the Treaty of Saint Petersburg was signed, which awarded the whole of Sakhalin Island to Russia and all the Kuril Islands to Japan.

Russia's approach to Korea and its activities in Manchuria drew it into direct conflict with Japan. "The Tsarist push toward Manchuria and Korea aroused suspicion and hostility not only from Russia's traditional western rivals, but from a new competitor for power in East Asia- Japan." (Goldman, 2012:7) As described in Chapter Three, following the Sino-Japanese War both countries entered into intense competition over Manchuria and Korea, and this ultimately led into the Russo-Japanese War in which Russia was defeated and compelled to signed the Treaty of Portsmouth, where Russia recognised Japan's legitimate interests in Korea and ceded the Liaotung Peninsula in China and the southern part of Sakhalin Island to Japan.

Following its territorial ambitions, Japan intervened in the Russian Civil War, backing the Whites in Siberia. The Japanese contingent was by far the largest that intervened in the war, with around 70,000 troops, but following the independence of the Far Eastern Republic Japanese forces were compelled to withdraw and the Far Eastern Republic then was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Soviet-Japanese relations remained calm; but the hostility and distrust between both countries did not disappear. Japan´s occupation of Manchuria in 1931 deeply altered relations between both countries: suddenly, Russia and Japan shared a 4,000 kilometre border. Japan grew stronger and Stalin, aware of the military weakness of Soviet forces in the Far East, adopted a policy of neutrality and appeasement toward Japan while gradually strengthening Soviet Far East forces. In 1939 Soviet and Japanese forces engaged in hostilities at the Manchukuo-Mongolia border, leading to an "undeclared war" (Nomonhan) in which the Japanese were forced to surrender. (Map 10)

In April 1941, two months before Germany invaded the Soviet Union; the five-year Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed. It is said that the incontestable Japanese defeat influenced the decision of Japan to move south and to attack the US in 1941 instead of attacking the USSR and adding a second front to Nazi Germany's ongoing invasion of the Soviet Union. (See Goldman, 2012)

The Soviet Union unilaterally terminated the Neutrality Pact and declared war against Japan in 1945, and subsequently occupied the Kuril Islands, including the four southernmost islands, which incidentally had never been held before by the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. Japan announced that the Soviet Union had violated the Neutrality Pact and illegally seized the islands. After the war, Japan concluded separate peace treaties with the Allies but not with the USSR. This was impeded mainly by the territorial question. "There has been no formal peace treaty between Japan and the Soviet Union or its successor, the Russian Federation. Russia's occupation of what they call the Southern Kuriles, known in Japan as the Northern Territories, continues to poison relations between the two countries to this day." (Goldman, 2012:185)

Negotiations regarding the territorial issue and the peace treaty started in 1955 but were unsuccessful. Instead of a peace treaty, Japan and the Soviet Union signed a joint declaration in 1956, terminating the state of war between both countries, and the USSR offered to hand over two of the disputed islands after signing a peace treaty. At that time, the Soviet Union aspired to separate Japan from the United States, but in 1961 Japan and the United States signed a security treaty and so the Soviet Union annulled its offer to return the two islands after signing a peace treaty. Afterwards, the Soviet Union claimed that a territorial issue between both countries did not exist and therefore ignored the problem. It should be noted that whereas political relations languished between the countries, bilateral economic relations flourished, and as a matter of fact, the 1970's were the dawn of Soviet-Japanese economic relations. In fact, Japan was the largest economic partner of the USSR among the non-socialist countries. The Japanese actively engaged in economic cooperation and several large scale joint projects were realised in Siberia and the RFE. Valeriy Kistanov, RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies notes that "the territorial dispute troubled neither Russia nor Japan in developing economic ties at the time." (Interview 3) The 1980s witnessed a further deterioration in the political sphere amid the growing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, and bilateral trade declined. It could be argued that for almost thirty years the US-Japan alliance obstructed the improvement of Russo-Japanese political relations.

Gorbachev 's new approach to Asia and his appeal to China, South Korea and Japan 'in favor of building new and equitable relations' in Asia Pacific (NY Times, 1986) along

with the terminus of the Cold War, was seen in Japan as an opportunity to make progress on the political field, and to further develop economic ties. Gorbachev underlined the need for a "new regional policy" and signalled that there were "indications of a turn for the better" in Russo-Japanese relations. (Ciark, 1988) Indeed, Gorbachev acknowledged the existence of the territorial dispute and called on both sides to address the issue. In 1991 Gorbachev's visit to Japan took place, the first in history for a Russian leader. Apart from the significance of the visit, as Kistanov notes, no breakthrough was achieved and Gorbachev "did not bring to the Japanese as a gift a suitcase with the four islands as they expected." (Interview 3)

The demise of the Soviet Union resulted in several changes in the bilateral relationship. President Yeltsin agreed to discuss the territorial issue and the Tokyo declaration was signed between both countries' leaders. This document established the 1956 declaration as the basis for any further agreement. (Hirose, 2015) Undergoing changes in Russia created many expectations and several plans were devised between both countries, including a five stage plan for returning the islands after signing the peace agreement, but in the end no achievements were consummated. In fact, Japan adopted a tougher stand toward Russia in the 1990s. In the words of Kistanov:

> The Japanese saw that Russia was in a very difficult situation, and thus they started to carry out a tactic called "indivisibility of politics and economics" (nerazdelimosti politikii i ekonomikii). They said, we are bringing you economic and financial help but only after you give us back the islands, but this thesis did not work. (Interview 3)

As this proved unsuccessful, Japan adopted a more balanced approach to Russia, although still maintaining the indivisibility of politics and economics, however, this approach resulted unsuccessful as well. In the interim, economic relations waned and for almost 20 years remained stagnant. Since the late 1990s, Japan has followed a 'multi-layered' approach to Russia, (Ogawa, 2001) which has resulted in more positive relations.

Putin's rise to power in 1999 brought few changes to the strained political relations between Russia and Japan, and although the leaders of both countries had several meetings they kept their diplomatic distance. Under Putin's presidency there were small attempts to improve bilateral relations by making efforts to make progress in the territorial disputes and showing willingness to carry out negotiations, however, they almost all completely failed

and during the first decade of the twenty-first century Japan and Russia remained politically distant.

Former Russian President Medvedev visited Kunashir Island in 2010, one of the disputed islands. Various cabinet ministers visited the islands and Medvedev even visited the islands a second time. In 2011 Russia carried out a series of military exercises on and around the islands and declared that it would enhance its military deployment there, (Hyodo, 2014) souring political relations to their lowest level in decades. The Japanese saw all this as completely impertinent and defiant behaviour, "but Medvedev did not seem to care about Japan's position." (Interview 3)

Since the return to power of Russia's President Putin and Japan's Prime Minister Abe, political relations have drastically improved between both countries. Abe visited Russia in 2013, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister to Russia in a decade, and brought a large delegation of Japanese businessmen. Similarly, several agreements were signed in fields such as economics, politics, culture, and cooperation in global affairs, and a very wide joint declaration was released. The visit included an extensive agenda and concluded with a variety of documents, as well as many memorandums of understandings and a joint statement. It was agreed that the countries should sign a peace treaty and conclude an agreement on the territorial issue, and both leaders called to upgrade the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. Despite this, the crisis between Russia and the West over Ukraine resulted in bilateral ties cooling once again, but nonetheless, during the last decade bilateral trade has grown at unprecedented rate and in 2013 had reached its highest level in history, despite the unresolved issues.

Natalia Kuhrt believes that Russia-Japan relations "[…] tend to lurch from one 'mini-crisis' to another, and lack of substance, and the failure to fully normalize relations is an obstacle to promoting real dialogue." (Kuhrt, 2007:155) Thus, in spite of the positive developments of recent years and the remarkable improvements in bilateral trade during the last decade, the bilateral relationship faces several challenges that prevent it from becoming a real partnership.

Politically and economically, what are the factors that have brought both countries together? What are the limitations to this partnership? Understanding the determinants of the relationship is fundamental.

6.2. Determinants

6.2.1. Security and Political Issues

Relations between Japan and Russia have fluctuated between increasing closeness and stagnation. According Valeriy Kistanov, Russo-Japanese relations develop at a "dead slow pace" (ni shatko ni valko), and are not warm but not cold. (Interview 3)

The return to power of Prime Minister Abe in 2012 coincided with President Putin's return to Russia's presidency. As emphasised by several scholars, this generated momentum in Russia-Japan relations. (Iwashita, 2013, Interview 3) A good and 'trustful' personal relationship has developed between Putin and Abe. (Hirose, 2015; Streltsov, 2015; Interview 3) Since early 2013, seven meetings have taken place between the leaders, as well as several telephone conversations and an exchange of personal messages. The summit meeting in Moscow between President Putin and Prime Minister Abe in April 2013, the first visit to Russia of a Japanese prime minister in a decade, became a landmark in Japan-Russia relations, as both leaders set the ground work for developing and improving Russo-Japanese relations in the coming years.

Since coming to power, Abe was determined to drastically improve ties with Russia as part of a long term strategy to acquire a reliable partner in Northeast Asia. Peace and stability in the region is in the national interests of both Japan and Russia, as it is essential for the prosperity and successful development of both countries. According to the joint statement released after the summit between Abe and Putin in 2013:

> The two leaders noted that the modern world is in the process of dynamic change and that because of the rapid acceleration of global processes in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Russian Federation and Japan share a great responsibility for the formation of the international agenda, as well as stability and prosperity, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region (AP). (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013a:210)

Towards this aim, it is crucial for both countries to develop friendly and stable relations with each other at the highest possible level. Prime Minister Abe has confirmed that "The development of good-neighborly relations with Russia is of great importance for

the stability and prosperity for East Asia in the 21st century." (RBTH, 2015b) Both leaders therefore called for the further development and deepening of ties, in order to upgrade the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. As stated in the same joint declaration:

> The two leaders agreed that the strengthening of friendly relations on the basis of the positive environment established between the two countries in recent years, it is in the national interests of the Russian Federation and Japan and creates good conditions for building a strategic partnership, which will seek both sides. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013a:210)

Nevertheless, it could be said that Russo-Japanese relations are currently at an average level. There is a framework of contacts and exchanges in economic, political, cultural, and security spheres, but cooperation at the highest level is still to be seen, particularly in the field of security and diplomacy. Indeed, nowadays Russia and Japan are far from being security partners. (Hill, 2013)

In this sense, one of the results of the Abe-Putin meeting in 2013 was the establishment of the 'two-plus-two' framework for dialogue between the foreign and defence ministers of Russia and Japan. The initiative for holding such meetings came from Japan and it was well received in Russia. It should be noted that Japan holds such conferences only with the US and Australia, and that Japan is the first Asian country to establish this sort of meeting with Russia. Following the first conference in November 2013, Japan and Russia's Foreign Ministers, Kishida and Lavrov, declared that the meeting opened a 'new page for Japan-Russia cooperation in security and defence' and 'marks a new stage in Russian-Japanese relations.' (Radyuhin, 2013) But, what is the relevance of the meeting? Trenin (2013c) observes that the significance is more psychological than strategic, "There are some areas, however, where cooperation may have primarily psychological rather than strategic value. As Russia and Japan are carefully embarking on a fresh attempt to fully normalize their relations, closer and more regular contacts in the foreign and security field, including military exercises, may be useful as confidence-building."

Generally speaking, and this is stated by several scholars of both countries, the national interests of Japan and Russia are not in conflict with each other, they do not pose a threat, and indeed they converge; it is in both countries interests to secure stability and

promote cooperation in Northeast Asia. (RIAC, 2012) Nevertheless, a major obstacle that hinders deepening ties between Russia and Japan is the absence of a peace treaty and the unsolved territorial dispute. The issue was discussed at the 2013 summit and both leaders urged the resumption of negotiations underlining the anomaly of not having signed a peace treaty.

> The two leaders agreed that the situation in which – 67 years after the end of the second world war – Russia and Japan had not signed a peace treaty, was abnormal. In order to further develop relations between the two countries and the creation of a broad Russian-Japanese partnership in the XXI century, the two leaders expressed their resolve, breaking through negotiations discrepancies in the positions of the parties to conclude a peace treaty by the final decision in a mutually acceptable form of this issue, the need for resolution confirmed by inclusion in the joint statement of the President of the Russian Federation and the Prime Minister of Japan on the adoption of Russian-Japanese plan of action and the Russian-Japanese action plan 2003. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013a:211)

Following the meeting, Abe and Putin declared that they would instruct foreign ministers to accelerate negotiations on this issue to find a mutually acceptable solution; and this was the first statement of this sort in a decade. We believe that the absence of a peace treaty and the unresolved territorial issue play a major role within the bilateral relationship and it is an impeding factor in deepening bilateral ties in different spheres, albeit not the sole factor. As Moscow scholar Kistanov notes: "This is a serious obstacle in our relations, this is confirmed by numerous western, Russian, but above all Japanese scholars. I consider that the problem exists but it is not the main issue." (Interview 3) I will further discuss the issue in the third section of this chapter.

Similarly, at their meeting in 2013, Putin and Abe coincided about the need to improve people-to-people relations and to promote each other's culture in order to develop a more trustful relationship between people.

> The two leaders agreed that in order to effectively promote the entire range of bilateral cooperation, the further deepening of mutual understanding and trust between peoples of the two countries, by strengthening humanitarian and cultural exchanges, including arrangements for the mutual promotion of national traditions of culinary art, was important, and therefore welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Japan on the establishment and activities of cultural centres. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013a:211)

People-to-people relations are a sphere that has to be developed, mostly by Russia. On the one hand, it could be said that Japan's image in Russia is positive. In a poll carried out by the Levada Centre in Russia in 2013, it was asked "Do you have a positive of a negative image of Japan?" 67 percent of those Russians polled said they had a positive image of Japan, and only 16 percent of those polled answered they had a negative one. (Levada Center, 2014) On the other hand, the image of contemporary Russia in Japan is to a great extent negative. According to a poll conducted by the Pew Research Centre in March 2014 (after Crimea's reunification), Japanese people were asked "Do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of Russia?" 23 percent of those asked answered they had a favourable opinion, but 69 percent said they had an unfavourable view of Russia. (Pew Research Center, 2014) A public opinion survey conducted in Japan in 2013 asked "Do you feel proximity/do you have friendly feelings to Russia?" 22 percent of those Japanese asked said yes, but 74 percent of the respondents said they did not. (Kazakov, 2014:143) It could be said that Russia's negative image in Japan was formed mainly during the Cold War, when the view of the USSR as an adversary, and even an enemy was disseminated. After the Cold War, not only did some of those negative stereotypes persist, but new ones were added, such as about the lack of democracy, existence of corruption, criminality, and a bad business environment, as well as the decades-long territorial dispute, and were overstated. (RIAC, 2012) It should be noted that whereas there is a negative image of the Russian Federation in Japan, Russian culture, particularly classic Russian literature and music, as well as Russian ballet and opera, is greatly valued by a large percentage of the Japanese population. (Interview, 10) As the President of the Tokyo Foundation claims, "The Japanese think very highly of Russian literature, classical music, ballet and cuisine. Unfortunately, negative attitudes are leftover from the time of the Soviet Union. […] Many regard Russia as an authoritarian state that sometimes use force against others" (RIAC, 2014)

In contrast to Japanese soft power, which is apparently a more effective long-term strategy for creating a positive image of Japan among the Russians, Russian soft power in Japan is 'very soft', and attempts to promote Russian culture face several problems, mainly a lack of funding and knowledge. Thus, Russia exerts little impact on shaping a positive image of the country within the Japanese elite and the public. (RIAC, 2012)

As has been said, Prime Minister Abe has been trying to strengthen ties with Russia and has met with Putin seven times in two years (2013-2014), and they have developed a 'good' personal relation. President Putin responded positively to this, both have tried to revitalise Russia-Japan relations, and this generated many expectations. Abe attended to the opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics in 2014 when western leaders boycotted it. Putin supported Japan's bid to organise the Olympics in 2020. In a similar manner, Russia has taken neutral position on Japan's new interpretation of collective self-defence. Despite this, following the crisis in Ukraine, relations chilled.

From the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Japan has shown solidarity with the West and condemned the reunification of Russia and the Crimea. Japan has remarked that it cannot and will not accept attempts to change the status quo by force. In a press conference on the 18th March, Foreign Minister F. Kishida stated that the referendum conducted in Crimea was illegal and violated the Ukrainian constitution, and that Japan does not therefore recognise the results. In his words, Russian approval of Crimea's independence "[…] is regrettable and infringes on Ukraine's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity." (MOFA JAPAN, 2014) Japan urged Russia to fully abide by international law and to attach importance to the unity of the G7, stressing "[…] the cooperative relationship [with Russia] has been strengthened since 2013 and based on this we communicate with Russia about Japan's position" (MOFA JAPAN, 2014) Although Japan denounced Crimea's reunification with Russia, it abstained from harsh criticism and underlined the good relationship and communication between both countries. Nonetheless, later that year, Kishida compared the situation in Ukraine with that in the Kuril Islands declaring: "What is happening in Ukraine, a change of the status quo by force, the problem of the Northern Territories, (Southern Kuril Islands) this also was a change in the situation by force." (The Japan Times, 2015) Russia answered that it had been militaristic Japan and Nazi Germany that together smashed the status quo by force. (The Japan Times, 2015)

Following the escalation of the situation in Ukraine, Japan joined other western countries in accusing Russia of carrying out actions to destabilise East Ukraine; but was reluctant to impose sanctions on Russia. As a member of the G7, but most of all, as a close ally of the United States, it could not avoid joining the sanctions policy of the West against Russia. Russia's Foreign Minister S. Lavrov said "We [Russia] view this unfriendly move

as fresh evidence of Japan's inability to pursue an independent foreign policy. By approving sanctions under external pressure, Tokyo is harming above all its own geopolitical standing." (Pollman, 2015) Valeriy Kistanov argues that "the sanctions imposed by Japan on Russia were merely nominal and did not aim to punish Russia, but only to show solidarity with the West." (Interview 3) Some scholars, however, believe that Japan's third package of sanctions were no longer symbolic. (Panov, 2014; Streltsov, 2015)

Russia's position in relation to Japan during the crisis has remained in general "neutral-friendly". (Streltsov, 2015) Although Putin and Lavrov have criticised Japan's position and lack of an independent foreign policy, in general they have refrained from making strong criticism as they have done in relation to other western countries. Russia did not impose restrictive measures against Japan as it did with other western countries.

Prime Minister Abe visited Ukraine in June 2015, the first Japanese premier to ever visit the country. During the visit, Abe, in addition to pledging to give additional economic assistance to Ukraine, reiterated that he "[…] would not tolerate any attempts to change the status quo by force." and showed commitment to "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine." (Pollman, 2015) Following Abe's visit to Ukraine, the Russian Defence Minister Shoigu ordered the acceleration of the construction of military and civilian infrastructure on the southern Kuril Islands. After his visit to Ukraine, Abe urged increased cooperation with Russia in all fields, to which President Putin responded that 'Japan bears responsibility for the chilly ties between the two nations as a result of Japan's sanctions' and said that it is on Japan's side about moving forward as 'Russia can do little to improve ties on its own.' (Kyodo News, 2015)

Some voices in Japan are calling for the sanctions to be lifted. (Kobayashi, 2014) For instance, in March 2015 the former Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama visited Crimea despite opposition from the Japanese government, and declared that Crimea's referendum was constitutional. There are also still many voices within Japan calling on the government to maintain Japan's stand against Russia, as illustrated in an editorial of the Asahi Shimbun: "Japan must remain in step with the United States and Europe on sanctioning Russia and stand firm on values such as abiding by international laws and protecting democracy and human rights." (Asahi Shimbun, 2014) Abe invited Putin to visit Japan in 2014, and although the meeting did not take place, it was not cancelled but only postponed.

Nonetheless, as Kistanov observes: "The Japanese did everything possible to ensure that the visit did not take place, mainly as a result of the conflict in Ukraine." (Interview 3) In a similar manner, the purpose of the visit was questioned in the Japanese media. "The Japanese media ask themselves why Putin is coming here, what the visit is going to give us. They say that the visit is not necessary at all, what do we have to deal at all with the leader of a country which behaves aggressively in foreign issues and seizes other countries' territories?" (Interview 3) According to Ichiro Iwasaki, "Japan expected nothing from Putin's visit." (Interview 8)

It should be pointed out that Japan's reasons for condemning Russia diverge from those of the West, as Streltsov (2015) points out. The US and EU's assessment is based on their own western-centred view of the world and its own perception of eligibility criteria for changing borders: only the West has the right to do that (e.g. Kosovo), Russia does not; Japan's position is more concerned with its own relations with the US. Unconditional support for the sanctions "[…] stems from the axiom that an alliance with Washington is the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy" (Streltsov, 2015) and Japan cannot do anything but to follow the US lead in this respect. Japan does not do anything that could worsen relations with the US, and certainly not condemning and sanctioning Russia would cause trouble for the US-Japan bilateral relationship. Since the end of World War Two, Japan's foreign policy has been guided by one principle: to always follow the American lead. By doing this, Japan relinquishes its aspirations for sovereign military while the US bears responsibility for its security, and Japan concentrates its efforts on economic growth. (Kobayashi, 2014) In fact, Japan cannot by any means abandon its military alliance with the US. Japan's Defence Forces are trained to operate in close cooperation with the US. In the context of China's rise and the territorial dispute, the Japan-US alliance remains Japan's last hope of deterring Chinese aggression in the region. (Kobayashi, 2014) In April 2015, Prime Minister Abe made a long visit to the United States in which both countries released new guidelines for defence cooperation to strengthen Japan-US alliance. (Tiezzi, 2015)

In Russia's view, the strengthen of the US-Japan alliance has not only caused stagnation but worsened bilateral relations with China and Russia, and as several scholars point out, the more Japan leans on the US, the closer China and Russia will be. The US is a

determinant factor in Russia-Japan relations, and they will be shaped to a large extent by US-Russia relations, as can be seen in Ukraine's crisis.

Abe's visit to the US was heavily criticised in China by the press, which stated that for the US, one cannot make friends without making enemies, and called the alliance a relic of the Cold War and the US-Japan alliance should not be strengthened but dumped. The Global Times commented in its editorial that the US and Japan should be ashamed of upgrading their alliance in front of the China-Russia relationship. (Global Times, 2015)

Another determinant of the Russia-Japan bilateral relationship is China. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons that Japan approached Russia was its concern over China. Furthermore, the China factor has played an important role in Japan's reticence to join Western sanctions on Russia. As noted by Ichiro Iwasaki from Hitotsubachi University: "The Abe cabinet was not positive about imposing stronger economic sanctions on Russia following the US. The main reasons were: presence of the northern territory problem, and the Chinese factor. I think that, in a short term, the latter factor is more important." (Interview 8) Japan is weary of China's ambitions in the region and its rising power, and the strengthening of the Russia-China strategic partnership is not in its interests. Japan does not want to further isolate Russia and push them closer to China. (Asari, 2012) Japan welcomes Russia's turning towards Asia and considers Russia a counterbalance against China. As Kistanov notes:.

> In Russia there is a group of experts, politicians, which see China as a threat to Russia, economically and militarily, specially to our Siberia and Russian Far East. The Japanese pay attention to this and in the context of current very bad relations between Japan and China, the Japanese experts on Russian affairs say: look, China for you it is a threat and for us it is a threat, let's together counter this threat, but for successfully countering this threat we have to solve a little problem, the territorial one. So, give us back our islands and we will further together oppose successfully to the Chinese threat. (Interview 3)

Russia's position is that Russia will not make friends with Japan against China, and will not make friends with China against Japan, and they believe that their territorial dispute is a problem that has to be solved within the bilateral relationship. "As long as Beijing remains friendly vis-à-vis Moscow, Russia will do nothing which would jeopardize the relationship with China. […] Japan should comprehend that Russia values to a great extent its relations with China not to be diverted in Japan's direction." (Trenin, 2013c) It is

in Russia's interests to upgrade the level of bilateral relations with Japan to balance relations with China, to gain a stronger position in Asia-Pacific, and to strengthen its foreign policy's independency, but this will not be at the expense of China.

The alliance with the US is at the core of Japan's foreign policy, and as long as US-Russia relations do not improve, it is unlikely that Russia and Japan will engage in serious issues. Russia and Japan have failed to build a comprehensive partnership of cooperation. "The reason for such a situation is that while understanding in general the importance of bilateral relations for each country, neither Moscow nor Tokyo has yet determined the strategic significance of these relations for them." (RIAC, 2012:7) In general, the Japanese government is making an attempt to retain its ties with the Putin administration.

6.2.2. Economic Issues

Arguably, economic cooperation comprises the most important field of the Japan-Russia relationship. "Among the various relations between Japan and the Soviet Union and Russia that developed after the Second World, the most important one, which promotes mutual benefits and interests most, is that of economy and trade." (Ogawa, 2001:173)

During the 1960s and 1970s, Japan was an important economic partner of the USSR, mostly due to joint large-scale projects in the RFE. In the 1980s, however, economic ties decreased and in the 1990s they remained stagnated and did not considerably improve until the 2000s.

Currently, Japan is Russia's second largest economic partner in Asia and it is often seen by the Russian elite as a balancer in Russia's relations with China. Russia-Japan economic bilateral ties have drastically advanced in the last 10 years. The total trade turnover between Russia and the Japan has grown constantly since 2004 when it totalled $8.8 billion. In 2005, the volume of trade accounted for $10.6 billion, and since then has continuously grown, with the exception of 2009 when bilateral trade slumped more than 50 percent: in 2010 it reached $24.1 billion, $30.7 billion in 2011, $33.4 billion in 2012, and in 2014 a total value of $34.2 billion. In 2014, Russia ranked 13th among Japan's trade partners, behind China, whose total trade with Japan totalled $299 billion, the United States $200 billion, South Korea $85.9 billion, Taiwan $64 billion, Australia $62 billion, Saudi

Arabia $55 billion, Thailand $53 billion, UAE $50 billion, Germany $43 billion, Indonesia $40 billion, Hong Kong $40 billion, and Qatar $35 billion. (Data from Japanese Trade and Investment Statistics, 2015) In turn, Japan ranked 8th among Russia's trade partners in 2014.

Russia's exports to Japan have increased in the last 10 years, from $5.7 billion in 2004, to $16.1 billion in 2010, and to $24.8 billion in 2014. In the same manner, Japan's exports to Russia have grown, from $3.1 billion in 2004, to $8 billion in 2010, to $9.3 billion in 2014. Russia's share in Japan's exports in 2014 was 1.3 percent whereas Japan's imports from Russia account for 3.1 percent of the country's total imports in the same year. Similarly, Japan's share in Russia's exports is 4.7 percent, whereas Russia's imports to Japan account for 2.7 percent of the total (Data from Japanese Trade and Investment Statistics, 2015) As can be seen, in spite of the continuous growth in bilateral trade in the last ten years, the role of both countries in each other's trade is rather minimal. It should be noted that the growth in trade volume is not the result of specific measures taken by both countries to deepen bilateral ties. "Bilateral trade turnover is growing or shrinking following the rules of the economic development situation both in Russia, Japan, and the world economy, not the instruction of governmental bodies of the two countries." (RIAC, 2012:13)

The economies of Russia and Japan are complementary: Russia enjoys natural resources which Japan does not have, and access to the Russian market is practically unlimited for Japan. Their economies do not compete with each other but are complementary, and this can be seen in the bilateral trade structure. As in the case of China, the structure of their bilateral relationship reflects the role of the two countries in the world economy. The structure of trade has remained practically the same: the USSR/Russia exports resource-based commodities to Japan and imports consumer goods, machinery and transport vehicles. The share of commodities in total trade, however, has changed drastically in the last 40 years.

Of the total value of Japanese exports to the USSR in 1972, 22 percent of the total exports were textiles, 9 percent chemicals, 18 percent iron and steel, 27 percent general machinery, 5 percent electric material, and 8 percent transport machinery. In comparison, of Japan's exports to Russia in 1991, textile accounted for 2 percent of the total, 10 percent

chemicals, 17 percent iron and steel, 28 percent general machinery, 15 percent electric material, and 12 percent transport machinery. Of the total value of Russia's imports from Japan in 2011, textile products accounted for less than 1 percent of the total exports, 1 percent chemicals, 3 percent iron and steel, 14 percent general machinery, 5 percent electric material, and transport machinery accounted for 67 percent of the total. (Data from Tabata, 2012) During the 1970s Japan mainly exported general machinery and steel pipes to Russia due to the joint projects in Siberia and the Soviet Far East; in 1981 the exports of iron and steel accounted for 40 percent of the total exports. With the end of the joint projects exports of iron and steel drastically decreased to account for only 1 percent of Japanese exports to Russia in 2002. At the same time, exports of transport machinery gradually rose, from a mere 12 percent in 1981, to 44 percent in 2002, reaching the highest level in 2008 when they accounted for 76 percent of total Russian imports from Japan. Thus, about two thirds of Russia's imports from Japan are transport machinery, mostly automobiles, used and new. This led several major Japanese automobile makers and machinery manufacturers to build assembly plants in Russia including Toyota Motors, which built a plant near Saint Petersburg and started production in 2007, as did Nissan Motors in Saint Petersburg in 2009, Mitsubishi Motors in Kaluga in 2010, Kamatsu in Yaroslavl in 2010, Isuzu and Takata in Ulyanovsk in 2012, Mazda in Vladivostok in 2012, Hitachi Machinery Construction in Tver in 2013, and Toyota Motors in Vladivostok in 2013, among others. (Takahashi, 2014)

The structure of imports thus shows that in Soviet times Japan was interested in joint cooperation with Russia in different fields, and now it seems that their main interest is the export of motor vehicles, and to a less extent motor vehicle production. As explain by the Russian academic Kistanov:

> […] (In the 1970s, Japan) actively developed trade with the Soviet Union, above all they were interested in getting fish, raw materials, coal, timber, metals. Japan exported a whole range of manufactures in contrast to what happens now. Now Russia only imports from the Japanese automobile industry. At that time (In the 1970s) we had a whole range of products, chemical, construction, tubes of high quality to build pipelines. (Interview 3)

Of the total value of the Soviet Union's exports to Japan in 1972, 1 percent of the total exports was fish, 12 percent was cotton, 44 percent was timber, 10 percent coal, 2 percent crude oil, 3 percent petroleum, and non-ferrous metals were 20 percent of the total.

In comparison, in 1991, 11 percent of the total of Russia's exports to Japan were fish, 1 percent cotton, 15 percent timber, 11 percent coal, petroleum products 4 percent, 36 percent non-ferrous metals, and 7 percent gold. Of the total value of Japan's imports from Russia in 2011, 7 percent of the total was fish, 3 percent timber, 10 percent coal, 33 percent crude oil, petroleum products 7 percent, 26 percent LNG, and 12 percent non-ferrous metals. (Data from Tabata, 2012) In the 1970s, the main imports of Japan from Russia consisted of timber and non-ferrous metals. Timber remained the main export commodity until the end of the 1980s when non-ferrous metals became the Soviet Union's main export to Japan. "Imports of timber from the RFE were promoted on the basis of agreements which specified the import from Japan of machinery for the development of those regions." (Tabata, 2012) From the late 2000s imports of crude oil and LNG dramatically increased and now they account for more than 60 percent of Russia's exports to Japan.

As one of the world's leading energy exporters Russia epitomises the ideal partner for Japan in this field. As in the case of China and South Korea, energy is the most significant field for bilateral economic cooperation. Following the Fukushima accident, Japan has considered increasing their share of Russian energy supplies to 35-40 percent. (RIAC, 2012) Russia's energy exports to Japan have grown considerably in the last 8 years. In 2013 Russia accounted for about 10 percent of Japan's energy supplies, whereas in 2006 its share in Japan's oil and gas imports was only 0.4 percent. Russia's share in Japan's total LNG imports grew from 0 percent in 2008 to 11 percent in 2014. In a similar manner, Russia's share of Japan's total crude oil imports grew from 0.7 percent in 2006 to 8.2 percent in 2014. (EIA, 2015b) This rapid increase was prompted by the oil and gas development projects in Siberia and the RFE, particularly due to the development of new oil and gas fields in East Siberia, the Sakhalin oil and gas projects, the construction of the ESPO and the LNG project in Sakhalin. These projects offer many opportunities for Japanese businesses. This will be further discussed in the third section of this chapter.

Apart from energy, there are other fields of economic cooperation. In the Joint Statement of 2013, President Putin and Prime Minister Abe underlined the steady growth of economic bilateral ties between both countries and expressed their intentions to strengthen economic ties by developing cooperation in different fields.

> The two leaders concurred on the necessity of the development of cooperation in the sphere of modernisation, innovation, production and consumption of products

> with high added value with the use of modern technology, noting the important role of the Japanese Advisory Council in the modernisation of the Russian economy. The two leaders focused on the importance of the expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of modernisation of transport infrastructure, solving the problems of the urban environment, development of the food industry, the distribution and practical use of advanced medical technologies, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, and on the need to intensify the work of relevant bilateral working groups and other mechanisms of cooperation for the specified. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013a:214)

At the summit meeting between Putin and Abe in 2013, several agreements on economic projects were made, intended to develop high-technologies and innovations in areas of energy efficiency, timber processing, agriculture, medicine, city planning, as well as waste processing in Russia. (The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Japan, 2015) Similarly, there is bilateral economic cooperation in the healthcare sector, including the Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment Centre in Russia; and pharmaceuticals, such as the Takeda pharmaceutical plant in Yaroslavl.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met in September 2016 at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. At the meeting, Abe detailed the eight-point plan for economic cooperation with Russia which he had proposed in Sochi earlier in the year to further develop bilateral economic ties. According to Valery Kistanov, Abe has tried hard to develop good relations with Putin in 2016. (Kistanov, 2016) For instance, Abe created a new cabinet position: the Minister for Economic Cooperation with Russia. The role was assigned to Seko, the current Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry. Indeed, this is the only ministerial portfolio that specifically refers to another country. (Murashkin, 2016)

The Russia-Japan Intergovernmental Committee on Trade and Economic Issues plays an important role in the development of bilateral economic relations. It is the only forum holding regular meetings at different levels to discuss the prospects for Russia-Japan economic cooperation. The Committee has two working subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Trade and Investment, and the Subcommittee on Interregional Cooperation. (The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Japan, 2015)

Russia and Japan deem bilateral cooperation in science and technology to be fundamental. Under the agreement on scientific and technical cooperation signed in 2000, the Russian-Japanese Commission on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (CSTC)

was established under the sponsorship of the Russian Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The CSTC supports joint innovation and scientific projects in different fields such as agriculture and forestry, plasma physics and nuclear fusion, high-energy physics and accelerators, nuclear medicine, environmental protection, Earth sciences, life sciences, oceanology, communications technologies, energy research, materials, mechanics, and biotechnology. Several universities and research institutes from both countries participate in the Committee. (The Embassy of the Russian Federation to Japan, 2015)

Similarly, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science jointly fund about 30 research projects in the following areas: mathematics, mechanics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, medicine, Earth sciences, human and social sciences, information technology, and computer systems.

As a matter of fact, the trade volume between Japan and Russia underwent a sharp increase in the last decade reaching a highest point ever in 2013, and cooperation has been developed in different fields. Bilateral economic cooperation remains low compared with other partners, however.

The large growth in trade volume was driven by a limited number of commodities: automobiles, LNG and crude oil. The overdependence of bilateral trade on these commodities does not guarantee further development of economic ties in other fields, such as high-tech and innovation. The export of natural resources from Russia to Japan will continue to increase, irrespective of the political situation and therefore bilateral trade will likely continue to grow, however, developing cooperation in other fields is crucial in order to qualitatively upgrade bilateral economic ties.

6.3. Regional Issues

6.3.1. Security and Political Issues

As described earlier in this work, Russia's expansion in 1860 to the Pacific, the foundation of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and Russia's growing interests in Korea and Manchuria, led Japan to view the Russian Empire

as a threat. Similarly, Japanese expansion and growing interests in mainland Asia grew as a threat to Russia's interests and even to Russia's sovereignty, such as during the Russian Civil War and in the 1930s and early 1940s. In the post-War period and until the 1990s, Japan and the Soviet Union viewed each other as a menace. In the case of Japan and due to the military build-up in the Soviet Far East, the region became the main source of threat to Japan's security. In 1989, following Gorbachev's speeches on Asia, Japan considered the Soviet Far East military forces as the main 'potential threat' to the country. Only in the mid-1990s, following the demise of the USSR and after the withdrawal of North Korea from the Nuclear No-Proliferation Treaty, did developments on the Korean Peninsula become the main security concern for Japan. Currently, the main security concerns of Japan are the nuclear programme of the DPRK and China's growing military capabilities and assertiveness. In the case of Russia, "No longer does Japan consider the Russian Far East as a source of threat; however, for Japan's security as a region, the Russian Far East is closely related to areas in which Japan has a security interest." (Junzo, 2005:31) Those areas are the Korean Peninsula and the Sea of Japan. Thus, and in spite of Russia's military reform and the modernisation and strengthening of its military force in the RFE, it no longer poses a direct threat per se to Japan's security, but is potentially a balance and a factor in the stabilisation of the region, particularly in the case of the North Korean problem, which is arguably the main direct threat to Japan's security. "The Russian Far East represents the key for Japan in its attempts to participate in multinational cooperation with its interests in stabilizing the Korean Peninsula. […] While from a security perspective Japan's level of interest in the Russian Far East continues to decline in comparative terms, its importance for external strategy continues to increase." (Junzo, 2005:36) Still, there is an important security and political matter yet to be resolved: the territorial dispute.

The Kuril Islands is an archipelago that stretches from Hokkaido Island, Japan, to the Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia. The disputed territory between Russia and Japan consists of the four southernmost islands of the archipelago, located off the northeast coast of the Nemura Peninsula on Hokkaido Island: Habomai (95 km2), Shikotan (251 km2), Kunashir (1,490 km2), and Iturup Island (3,168 km2). It should be noted that the area of the individual islands differs greatly from one another: the land area of Habomai Islands is 2

percent of the total disputed area, Shikotan 5 percent, Kunashir 30 percent, and Iturup, which is the biggest, comprises 63 percent of the disputed land territory. (Map 16)

As mentioned before in this chapter, according to the Treaty of Shimoda (1855), the border between Russia and Japan was established between the islands of Iturup and Urup, and thus, the four southernmost islands of the Kuril Island chain became part of the Japanese territory with the establishment of Russia-Japan relations. Twenty years later in the Treaty of Saint Petersburg (1875) the Russian Empire ceded the sovereignty of the whole archipelago to Japan.

In the Yalta Agreement (1945), the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain agreed that two or three months after the surrender of Germany, the Soviet Union would enter into war against Japan on the condition that "The Southern part of Sakhalin as well as the islands adjacent to it shall be returned to the Soviet Union; […] [and] the Kurile Islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union." (Kimura, 2010:183) Following the surrender of Nazi Germany, the Presidents of the United States and China, and the Prime Minister of Great Britain stated in the Potsdam Declaration that "[…] Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine." (Kimura, 2010:184) The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed between Japan and the Allied Powers (except the USSR), established that Japan would lose the recently annexed territories and would renounce "[…] all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands." (Kimura, 2010:185) In all these documents, it was agreed between the Allies and Japan that the Kuril Islands were under Soviet sovereignty, however, the definition of the Kuril Islands remained unclear and Japan claimed sovereignty over the four southernmost islands, asserting that they had always been part of Japan and the were not part of the Kuril Islands chain, and were illegally occupied by the USSR.

The Japan-USSR Joint Declaration of 1956 was signed instead of a peace treaty, stipulating the termination of the state of war between Japan and the Soviet Union and the resumption of diplomatic relations. In the Paragraph 9 of the joint declaration:

> Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics agree to continue, after the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan, negotiations for the conclusion of a peace treaty. […] The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, desiring to meet the wishes of Japan and taking into consideration the interests of Japan, agrees to hand over to Japan the Habomai Islands and the island of Shikotan. However, the handing over of these

> islands to Japan shall take place after the conclusion of a peace treaty between Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (Kimura, 2008:190)

At first Japan responded positively to the proposal of the Soviets to hand over Habomai and Shikotan after signing a peace treaty; but through the growing tension between the United Sates and the Soviet Union, the US exerted enough pressure to spoil the agreement.

> Behind Japan's back was the United States. Indeed, Japan was ready to sign a peace agreement and put to an end to this and to get back two islands. However, the Americans did not want normalization of bilateral ties between Japan and the USSR at all, particularly at a time when the Cold War had already started. The United States saw Japan as a far post in the Far East with the help of which it could reach the Soviet Union. They did not want any normalisation of relations whatsoever. They even told the Japanese that if they signed the peace agreement with the Soviet Union to return the two islands, they would never give them back Okinawa. (Interview 3)

Japan not only rejected the proposal but claimed that Iturup and Kunashir, along with Habomai and Shikotan Islands, were not part of the Kuril Islands and declared the return of the four islands as the precondition for signing a peace treaty, and started to call the aforementioned islands 'the Northern Territories'. In the 1960s the USSR cancelled its proposition to return two islands after signing a peace agreement, and until late 1980s maintained the position that a territorial problem with Japan simply did not exist.

Under the leadership of Gorbachev and Yeltsin the territorial issue was recognised, but neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin confirmed the 1956 joint declaration. In 1993 the Tokyo Declaration on Japan-Russia relations was signed, and Prime Minister Hokosawa and President Yeltsin agreed in that document that "[…] negotiations towards an early conclusion of a peace treaty through the solution of this issue (sovereignty of Iturup, Shikotan, Kunashir, Habomai) on the basis of historical and legal facts and based on the documents produced with the two countries' agreement as well as on the principles of law and justice should continue." (Kimura, 2010:195) This was the first important document on the issue signed in almost four decades; it set the basis for further negotiations.

President Putin in 2001 announced the validity of the Soviet-Japanese declaration of 1956; in fact, he was the first Soviet/Russian leader to make such a statement since Khrushev. "When Putin met Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in Irkutsuk (sic) in 2001, he announced that Russia had an obligation to reinforce the agreement and would transfer

Shikotan and Habomai to Japan. Nevertheless, this fell far short of Japan's expectations." (Iwashita, 2013:3) The proposition was not viable and Japan continued to hold its position about return of the four islands. Similarly, Russia continued to urge Japan to recognise the results of the Second World War.

Currently, Japan still holds the decade-long official position about the return of the four islands. According to the Japanese government, the Northern Territories 'are an inherent part of the territory of Japan, which has never been held by foreign countries' and that 'continues to be illegally occupied by Russia' underlining that 'the Government of the United States of America has also consistently supported Japan's position'. (MOFA JAPAN, 2011) The reason Japan believes the islands to be illegally occupied by Russia is described as follows:

> […] by the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union, in violation of the Neutrality Pact that was still in force between Japan and the Soviet Union, opened the war with Japan. Even after Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration, Soviet forces continued their offensive against Japan and occupied all of the Four Northern Islands from 28 August 1945 to 5 September 1945. Subsequently, the Soviet Union unilaterally incorporated the territories under occupation into its own territories without any legal grounds, and by 1949 had forcibly deported all Japanese residents of the Four Northern Islands (approximately 17,000 people). (MOFA JAPAN, 2011)

Japan stresses that continuing negotiations with Russia is founded 'on its basic policy of resolving the issue of the attribution of the four Northern Islands and concluding a peace treaty with Russia', pointing out that it would be flexible in time and manner of an eventual return of the islands, respecting the rights and interests of the Russian citizens there. (MOFA JAPAN, 2011)

Japan has suggested a 'step-by-step return'; this is the successive return of the four islands. The proposition is based on the joint declaration of 1956. In that case, Russia would first return Habomai and Shikotan and guarantee the continuation of negotiations to hand over the Kunashir and Iturup. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013c) Japan's condition would be that Russia should recognise Japanese sovereignty over the four islands.

In his meeting with Abe in 2013, Putin insinuated that one of the ways to solve the long term dispute would be to halve the disputed area between Japan and Russia, as Russia did with China and Norway. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013c) In fact, this was the first time that Putin suggested this possible solution. The same position had been taken by former

Prime Minister Aso, who proposed it in 2006. Similarly, experts in Japan have recently started talking about the feasibility of the fifty-fifty approach: Russia handing Kunashir, Habomai, Shikotan and the western part of Iturup to Japan. The three islands and the western part of Iturup constitute about fifty percent of the disputed land. This proposition has gained more support in recent years among the population and scholars but not from the government, which has stated that it is not moving from its position demanding the return of the four islands. "For any head of Japanese government, political figure or diplomat, the deviation from the official position is fraught with broken political career and public ostracism." (RIAC, 2012:23)

The fifty-fifty approach faces still faces opposition, and not only from, the government but also from scholars and the press. It is argued that Russia is not sincere about solving the issue and has not explicitly made any proposal since 1956, even when the USSR illegally occupied an inherent part of Japan in violation of the Neutrality Pact. Many in Japan fear that it could establish a precedent for future negotiations with China. According to the Japanese, "A national territory is not something that can be shared. There is not a single reason that Japan should make concessions. If we are in doubt, China and South Korea will take advantage of our weakness in our dispute regarding the islands of Senkaku and Takesima." (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013d:176)

Years ago in Japan, it seemed that public opinion strongly supported the official position, however, it seems that now they favour a more flexible approach and therefore take the proposition of Russia to carry out negotiations, and somehow divide the islands and put an end to this issue for once and all, seriously. In an opinion poll from 2013, Japanese people were asked "Do you support the position of the government of getting back all the Northern Territories? Or, do you think that it is better to have a flexible approach to it, and move from the mandatory claim of reclaiming the four islands?" Only 29 percent of those polled supported the official position, and 67 percent felt that the Japanese government should follow a more flexible position. (Golovin, 2013:101) In another poll taken in 2013, Japanese people were asked "To what extent could Japan concede in negotiations about the Northern Territories? 22.6 percent of those asked answered that Japan should insist on the return of the four islands, 21 percent favoured a 50-50 division, receiving three and one/fourth of the islands, 15 percent of those polled

answered that Japan should get three islands, and 34 percent of those polled answered that Japan should reclaim two islands and then continue talks. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013b:159)

In 2012 Putin expressed Russia's intentions to start negotiations afresh over the Kuril Islands, and called for an acceptable compromise. He said "A judoka must take a brave step forward not only to win, but also to avoid losing. We don't have to achieve victory. In this situation, we have to reach an acceptable compromise." (The Asahi Shimbun, 2012)

In Russia, there are three main groups regarding the settlement of the dispute: the military, who see a strategic advantage in retaining the islands; the business lobby, who favour it for greater economic cooperation; and the political elite in the middle ground. (Dash, 2010)

It could be said that the majority of Russians are against transferring the four islands to Japan. In 2014 a public opinion survey was conducted in Russia by the Levada Center, and Russians were asked "In principle, are you for or against Russia transferring these islands (Kurils) to Japan", 82 percent of the respondents were against this idea, and only 8 percent of those polled said they supported it. Russians are interested in improving cooperation with Japan, but they strongly oppose territorial concessions. (Levada Center, 2015)

The occupation of the islands by the USSR was not illegal to Russians, as it was established in official documents. In the last 15 years, Russia has stated that it will abide to the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956: they would comply with returning Habomai and Shikotan to Japan following the signing of a peace agreement. "From Russia's point of view, there is no basis for Japan's claim to Etorufu [Iturup] and Kunashuri [Kunashir]." (Iwashita, 2013:4) The Russians have declared that they are ready to carry out negotiations and have hinted a fifty-fifty approach as a way to reach an agreement.

Nonetheless, it seems that the situation is different from that of Russia and China's solution to their territorial dispute using the fifty-fifty approach. Russia had much more to gain by solving his territorial dispute with China: there was a convergence of interests which made it imperative for both countries to solve the issue. In the case of Russia and Japan, it seems that such a convergence of interests does not exist, the benefits of reaching

a compromise do not compensate for the losses. Nikita Khrushchev had reason to make such a proposal: to separate Japan from its US reliance and to bring it closer to the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Nowadays, an agreement would not mean bringing Japan closer to Russia from the United States; Japan's foreign policy will continue to lean on US leadership. In other words, in the current circumstances, the main impediment for Russia to build a true partnership with Japan is the United States, so resolving the territorial dispute will not make Russia friends with Japan. The benefits do not outweigh the losses.

Japan's reasons have more to do with security than economic issues, particularly the need to counterbalance China. Putin seems to the Japanese to be the only hope of solving the issue, they think the issue can only be solved by a Russian president with much power; and for them, Putin now has enough power to make a political deal. This is one reason why Japan, under the current crisis between Russia and the West over Ukraine, does not want to spoil their relations with Russia, and particularly with Putin, and have been reluctant to sanction Russia.

> Putin for them is the only real hope for solving the territorial issue. They are not fools at all, they understand that in Russia everything is decided by the head of state, and that is why they have always communicated with him, as they did with Gorbachev and Yeltsin, and generally speaking, they do not want to make Putin angry with these sanctions. (Interview 3)

Russia and Japan adopted the "Joint Statement on the Development of Japan-Russia Partnership" in 2013. They agreed to restart negotiations in order to solve the territorial issue and ratify the peace treaty.

The futility of claiming the return of the four islands is becoming clear in Japan. Despite this, in Russia it is believed that Japan's official position is unlikely to change in the near future. It seems Russia could only review article 9 of the Joint Declaration, as proposed by Putin, and would not offer more than the fifty-fifty solution, and the benefits of making this concession should be clear for Russia. Even if Japan changed its official policy, it is very likely that more difficulties will follow.

6.3.2. Economic Issues

For Japan, the APEC summit in Vladivostok symbolised Russia's engagement with Asia

and Russia's attempt under Putin to pay attention to Asia more than ever, in order to be regarded not only as a European country but as part of the Asia-Pacific. (Asari, 2012) Japan understands that President Putin has accorded his highest priority to the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. (Fushita, 2012)

Trade between the RFE and Japan has gradually developed in the last decade. The share of Japan in RFE imports decreased from 25.6 percent in 2006 to 19.6 percent in 2014. In contrast, the share of Japan in RFE exports increased from 22.1 percent in 2006 to 29.7 percent in 2014. The share of Japan in the overall external trade of the RFE passed from 23.4 percent in 2006 to 26.3 percent in 2014, reaching its highest point in 2008 when it accounted for 32.8 percent of the total. (Korolev, 2015)

The main field for Russia-Japan cooperation in Siberia and the Russian Far East is energy. Japanese aspirations to diversify and secure its energy sources are matched by Russia's national strategy of diversifying its energy exports. It is imperative for Japan to improve its energy security and for Russia to exploit new markets in East Asia.

In the joint declaration released after the Putin-Abe summit in 2013, the head of states of both countries emphasised the importance of cooperation in energy projects.

> The leaders of the two countries, sharing the common belief that energy is one of the key areas of Russian-Japanese economic cooperation, welcomed the completion of the construction of the pipeline system "Eastern Siberia – Pacific Ocean", stressed the importance of enhancing bilateral energy cooperation in the oil and gas sector on mutually beneficial terms, including in Eastern Siberia and the far East of Russia. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013:215)

Russo-Japanese energy cooperation in the RFE increased drastically with the Sakhalin-I project, which began oil production in 2005. In fact, the Japanese consortium, the Sakhalin Oil and Gas Development Company, holds 30 percent of the shares of the project, along with Exxon Mobil with 30 percent, ONGC Videsh Ltd. from India which holds 20 percent, and Rosneft with 20 percent of the total shares. In 2006 Sakhalin-I commenced exports of crude oil, "Sokol", from the DeKastri oil terminal in northern Khabarovsk Krai. Currently 20 percent of the oil production of Sakhalin-I is exported to Japan. (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan, 2013)

Sakhalin-II is a large integrated oil and gas project which has important Japanese participation. The Sakhalin Energy Investment Company Ltd. is the Sakhalin-II project operator and the shareholders are Gazprom with 50 percent plus one share, Royal Dutch

Shell with 27.5 percent minus one share, Mitsui and Co. Ltd with 12.5 percent of shares, and the Mitsubishi Corporation with 10 percent of the total shares. In 2008 as part of Sakhalin-II project the Trans-Sakhalin oil and gas pipeline was completed, 300km of offshore and 1,600km of onshore multi-phase oil and gas pipelines, to transport oil and gas from offshore fields located 13-16km from the north-eastern coast of Sakhalin Island to the LNG plant and oil export terminals in Prigorodnoye at the south of the island; oil and LNG exports from those terminals commenced in 2009. In 2014 the projects produced and offloaded 5.35 million tons of oil and produced 10.8 million tons of LNG. In June 2015 Gazprom and Royal Dutch Shell signed an agreement to expand the Sakhalin-II project, adding a third line that would add 5 million tons of LNG. In 2013, 30 percent of the total oil production and 80 percent of the total LNG production of Sakhalin-II was exported to Japan. (Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan, 2013) As Norio Horie from Toyama University notes, Japanese firms have played an important role in the Sakhalin-I and II projects, which has enhanced cooperation in energy and led both sides to look for cooperation in new projects. For Japan, the Sakhalin projects remain at the core of Russia-Japan cooperation and are taken as an example of how to cooperate and invest in Russia. (Interview 7)

Similarly, the second section of the East-Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline (ESPO-2) was opened in 2013, running from Skovorodino to Kozmino Terminal with a capacity of 35 million tons per year. In 2013 Japan received 36 percent of ESPO's oil. (Motomura, 2014)

The exports of crude oil and LNG from Russia to Japan drastically increased after exports from Sakhalin and East Siberia started in the late 2000s. This was a consequence of the opening of the DeKastri terminal export, the LNG plant in Sakhalin, the oil export terminal of Sakhalin-II, the export terminal from ESPO at Kozmino, and the conclusion of ESPO-2.

One strategic field of Russia-Japan energy cooperation is LNG. When deliveries of LNG under the Sakhalin-II project started in 2009, the share of Russia in Japan's LNG imports grew from 0 percent in 2009 to 10 percent in 2013. Russia's share of Japan's LNG imports in 2014 was 10 percent, behind Australia which accounted for 21 percent, Qatar 18

percent, and Malaysia 17 percent, but ahead of Indonesia with a share of 7 percent, and Brunei 6 percent. (Motomura, 2014)

Japan has increased LNG imports since the Fukushima earthquake in 2011, but Russia's share in Japan's LNG imports have only expanded one percent in the last four years, from 9 percent in 2010 to 10 percent in 2014. This is mainly because Russia has only one LNG project (Sakhalin-II), so there is little room for a drastic expansion of LNG exports. Russia is thus planning to drastically increase its LNG facilities in order to increase its exports to Asian countries, principally South Korea and Japan. By 2020, Russia is planning to have four or five LNG projects producing 40 to 50 million tons of LNG per year. (Motomura, 2014) These projects are: the Far East LNG project, Yamal LNG project, and Vladivostok LNG project. The three mainly target Japan and South Korea. Yamal LNG is planned to start exporting LNG by 2017 and is expected to produce 16 million tons a year, whereas Vladivostok LNG is expected to commence production in 2018 and has planned production of 15 million tons per year. If the current share of the supply to Japan of the total volume of Russian LNG exports continues (70%), exports of Russian LNG will be about 17.5% of the aggregate total imports of Japan. (Reutov, 2013)

The Vladivostok LNG project is particularly, attractive for Japan. In 2012 a memorandum between the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy under the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (ANRE) and Gazprom was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Noda and President Putin, and the document is expected to boost comprehensive cooperation for the project. (Motomura, 2014) JFG (Itachu, Marubei, JAPEX, INPEX) and Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding for joint marketing of the project. The plan is that gas from Sakhalin would be transported via the Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok pipeline, processed into liquefied natural gas at the LNG plant in Vladivostok and then transported to Japan. The Vladivostok LNG project could thus become a new model for Russia-Japan cooperation in the RFE. Nevertheless, it has been said that due to western sanctions, Gazprom may delay the implementation of the project, and thus the future of the project remains uncertain. (Mazneva, 2015) Western sanctions have severely limited the options for investments and technology transfers in the LNG sector.

Japan imports about 80 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East, and therefore, Russia plays a relevant role in Japan's aim to reduce oil dependency on the Middle East. Russia's share in Japan's crude oil imports was 8 percent in 2014, behind Saudi Arabia whose total exports to Japan accounted for 34 percent of the country's oil imports, United Arab Emirates 24 percent, Qatar 11 percent, ahead of Kuwait whose share was 7 percent, and Iran 5 percent. (Data from EIA, 2015b) Russia's oil imports continue to grow and are expected to reach 15 percent of Japan's share of oil imports before 2020. Similarly, Japanese firms have expressed their interest in partnership with Russia in new oil projects in Sakhalin and East Siberia. "So far, two projects in offshore Sakhalin, which Japanese companies have joined, are performing successfully. Now East Siberia is seen as the new frontier to be tackled by Japan. Strong will was expressed on both sides in support of the projects in East Siberia. It is Japanese policy to foster the development of oil projects located within short distance of its borders." (Motomura, 2014:75)

A bilateral energy project discussed in the last decade is the gas pipeline from Russia to Japan: a 1,500 kilometre gas pipeline running from Sakhalin to the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. The project was discussed in Japan in 2004, however, it was not developed due to a lack of interest from the Japanese electricity and gas companies. (Reutov, 2013) Recently the project has again been raised; in fact, the Tokyo Gas Co., Japan Petroleum Exploration Co., and Nippon Steel & Summit Engineering Co. completed a feasibility study for the project, estimating the cost in $3.7 to $5 billion and to be completed in five to seven years. (Kuchma, 2015) It could yield as much as 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year, which would be around 17 percent of Japan's gas imports. The gas is expected to be cheaper than the LNG imported from Russia, and Russia's exports to Japan would drastically increase. It seems that both governments' priority is the LNG project, however. Gazprom particularly is more interested in the construction of LNG plants. (See Reutov, 2013)

Japan is interested in the development of coal deposits in Sakha Republic as well as in cooperation in fuel and the electricity sector, and this could include joint ventures to produce machinery and equipment. In fact, there is Japanese participation in the modernisation of oil refineries. (Minakir, 2014)

In President Putin's words, Russia's energy policy towards Japan could be summarised as follows:

> Russia's oil and gas reserves are large enough and we are capable of supplying the Japanese economy's growing needs without any negative effect on our traditional partners and Russia's own developing economy. We are neighbours, so in terms of logistics and geographic proximity, this kind of cooperation is entirely logical, clear and effective. It could involve joint extraction of oil and gas or joint construction of liquefaction plants. Gazprom is prepared to invest its resources into new gas delivery capacity to Japan, and invest money into pipeline systems on Japan's territory. We are prepared to look into building additional energy capacity on Russia's territory, subsequently delivering electrical energy to Japan. In this respect, we can work together in the shipbuilding sector as well, to create capacity in the Far East for building tankers to supply LNG to our Japanese partners. (President of Russia, 2013)

The increase in Russian exports of oil and LNG to Japan, which is likely to continue growing, has led to bilateral economic relations centred around energy resources.

Apart from energy, there are other fields for cooperation. In the Initiative for the Strengthening Japan-Russia Cooperation in the Far East Russia and Eastern Siberia (2007), there are proposals for cooperation in fields where the Russia-Japan relationship is still minimal. These areas for cooperation include transportation, information and communication, environment, health and medicine, and investment.

In the 2013 Joint Declaration President Putin and Prime Minister Abe agreed on the importance of promoting other fields of cooperation.

> The two leaders emphasised the importance of promoting mutually beneficial projects in such areas as energy, agriculture, infrastructure, transport, etc. aimed at enhancing trade and economic cooperation between Japan and the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia, and also called for the holding of bilateral consultations on issues of public-private partnership to promote cooperation in these regions. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013:217)

Agriculture and timber are important spheres for cooperation. Japanese business has invested capital and technology in the Russian forestry and agribusiness sectors. For instance, a high-tech timber and chemical plant was built in Krasnoyarsk, a Russia-Japanese joint venture. Cooperation in agriculture is being developed, and there are plans to develop joint ventures; the Hokkaido Bank and Amur Region joint projects are among these new initiatives. In fact, this is one of the most promising fields for cooperation.

Russia's rich farmland and Japanese high technology in agriculture could improve food security on a regional level. (President of Russia, 2013)

Healthcare is another field in which cooperation could be strengthened. Improving infrastructure and the construction of high-tech medical centres in partnership with Japan could be part of the attempt to improve the quality of life and the prevention of further depopulation. An example of bilateral partnership in this field in the RFE is the construction of the diagnostic medical centre, Hokuto, in Vladivostok in the spring of 2013.

Japan could provide technical and financial support in areas such as transportation, urban environmental systems and ecology. (Hirose, 2015) Infrastructure, connectivity and power technology for the revitalisation of the industry, as well as energy access, energy optimisation and stabilisation, and city planning with the use of ecology and energy efficient technologies are among the most promising sectors for cooperation on this sphere.

Another field is corporation network formation and human resource development. "[…] Japan should show its unique advantages over its competitors China and South Korea, not only in technology but corporate networks, human resources development, industrial financial system, because this is the infrastructure that gave rise to this technology." (Fushita, 2012)

Space cooperation is underdeveloped. Japan could also participate in the construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome, as well as in the infrastructure developments that the project requires. Similarly, the level of collaboration between the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and the Russian Federal Space Agency could be upgraded; this was discussed by Putin and Abe in 2013.

> The leaders of the two countries, stressing the importance of coordination of efforts in the space field, as well as noting the importance of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, stressed the need to adopt international norms of conduct to increase transparency and confidence in space activities and agreed on the need to strengthen bilateral dialogue in this area, including the search of new directions of cooperation. (Yaponiya nashikh dnei, 2013:218)

Japanese companies have expressed their readiness for full-scale cooperation in Siberia and the RFE. In recent years the interest of Japanese companies in doing business in the RFE constantly increased, from 31 percent in 2007 to 58 percent in 2014. (Sasaki, 2014) Japanese companies present in Siberia and the RFE include: Sakha Diamond, Sakha Republic; Sumitomo Joint Venture, Mitsui Joint Venture, and Maszda Joint Venture,

Primorsky Oblast; Yubetsu Joint Venture and Mitsui Joint Venture, Buryat Republic; and Tajima Mokuzai and Mitsui Joint Venture, Irkutsk Oblast. (Sasaki, 2014)

Arguably, Japan's Prime Minister is determined to establish a marked improvement in economic ties as demonstrates its decision to attend the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. Within the Forum, he detailed its eight-point economic cooperation plan with Russia which he announced earlier in the year. At the EEF, the Japanese delegation was the largest, even far exceeding the size of that from China. Nevertheless, "the Vladivostok forum featured more expressions of ambition with regard to Japan-Russia cooperation than concrete economic deals. Nonetheless, the bilateral discussions were symbolically important and there are expectations that substantive agreements will be reached in the coming weeks and months." (Brown, 2016)

For Japanese businesses, the main challenges for doing business in Russia are: the legislative system, administration, safety, import and export procedures, the tax system, and infrastructure. Japanese business also believes the territorial dispute to be a big obstacle to developing economic ties in the region. According to Iwasaki, the territorial issue does matter. "The problem of not settling the dispute is that for Japanese businessmen it is risky to invest in Russia. In case there is a problem, there are few political ways in which the issue can be addressed." (Interview 8)

According to Russian specialists, the Japanese business community is absent due to the absence of a favourable business environment, the year-long territorial dispute (RIAC, 2012), and Igor Makarov notes: "the economic situation in the RFE, and the Russian economy as a whole as nowadays it is not very attractive for Japanese investors". (Interview 5) In this regard, it is said that the Japanese have little interest in investing in the RFE. Ichiro Iwasaki argues, however, that "Japan do not participate in the development of projects due to the unfavourable business environment in Russia." (Interview 8) In the opinion of Semyon Korotchik, Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, in contrast to South Koreans, who take more risks and even invested in the Russian Far East in the 1990s, the Japanese are much more pragmatic and take fewer risks, they are looking more for profits in the short term. He believes that Japanese investors simply are not as interested as Koreans. (Interview 16)

In Russia, partnership with Japan is seen by some of the Russian elite as potentially as important as that with China. (Amirov, 2010) For instance, Trenin (2001) believes that Japan is a natural candidate for becoming Russia's main partner. Japan's "exclusive importance" is based on its technologies and investments, which are allegedly crucial for implementing development programmes in Siberia and the RFE. Accordingly, Japan would be the best candidate for playing the most important role in modernising Siberia. At the same time, as Iwasaki notes: "Japan welcomes Russia's turn to Asia, particularly vis-a-vis China. Japan does not want that Russia´s Asian policy to be focused on China." (Interview 8)

Japanese businesses could play an important role in the development of the RFE; they could become a serious alternative for Chinese investments. Nevertheless, aside from Sakhalin projects, there appear to be no joint large-scale Russo-Japanese projects planned for the near future. This contradicts Russia's new model for the development of the RFE in which Russia should cooperate with everyone in the region. Indeed, Japan has not actively participated in the Territories for Rapid Development. Initially, they were considered the main participants, they were the most valuable investors. There were several memorandums signed between the Minister for the Development of the Russian Far East and large Japanese corporations, however, their presence in these projects is very limited. Igor Makarov considers that "It partly depends on the crisis between Russia and the United States, but also on the situation of the Russian economy as it is now less attractive for investors due to the decrease of economic indicators." (Interview 5) Arguably, Japanese businesses invest very little in Asiatic Russia as the Russia has yet to offer something else apart of oil and gas. For this, the structure of the whole Russian economy has to be changed. Nonetheless, as Valery Kistanov observes:

> To change the export structure is very difficult because here everything depends on the domestic structural changes of our industries and our economy. If we had concrete valuable goods we could offer something different, but for the time being we do not see any attempt in Russia to produce goods with added value. (Interview 3)

As in the case of China, relations between Asiatic Russia and Japan are inextricably connected to the overall bilateral Russia-Japan relationship and therefore cannot be viewed as a separate issue. For an increase in Japan's participation in the development of Russia's eastern provinces there should be a change in the overall bilateral ties between Russia and

Japan; it is not a matter of just changing policies. The new model for the development of the RFE depends to a great extent on the relations between Russia and NEA countries and those between Russia and the US. As Valery Kistanov points out: "It is no secret that the situation in Russian-Japanese relations is largely a derivative of the sum of US-Russian and US-Japan relations." (Interview 3) Consequently, if US-Russian and Japanese-Russian relations do not improve it is highly unlikely that Japan will intensify cooperation with Russia in this matter.

6.3.3. The Arctic

Japan is not an Arctic state by virtue of its geography; however, it has several interests in the region. As were China and the ROK, Japan was granted observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013. Unlike China, Japan's engagement in Arctic issues is generally celebrated and creates little concern: Japan is technologically a highly advanced country with a high level of scientific knowledge and has conducted scientific research in the region for a long time; moreover, its political interests differ little from other Arctic state interests. Japan supports the objectives of the Arctic Council and is keen to promote international cooperation as well as sustainable development and environmental protection of the region. Japan has no claims in the Arctic and holds the position that issues should be addressed through the UNCLOS and the Arctic Council. Japan, as other Asian countries, specifically China and South Korea, insists that "The Arctic should be recognized as part of the common heritage of mankind. The international community should protect this area and use it for peaceful purposes." (Horinouchi, 2010)

Japan has been involved in Arctic activities since the 1970s, is not a newcomer compared to China and South Korea and has more expertise on Arctic research and activities. Unlike the ROK, however, it has neither an official policy nor a strategy for the region and its policy in this matter has been passive. Several scholars and members of the private sector have thus urged the government to devise an official Arctic policy outlining the country's interests and how they can be met.

Japan's major interests in the region are related to scientific research, the effects of climate change and the potential impact on global climate. According to the government,

protecting and understanding the Arctic environment is the main aim of Japanese involvement in the region, because climate change in the Arctic impacts the global climate. (Tonami, 2012) "The impact of climate change, causing rapid ice melting affected the Japanese policy-making community, which began to look more carefully to the Arctic." (Ohnishi, 2013) Japan believes that as a responsible member of the international community, it should participate in the protection of the Arctic environment.

Japan positions itself as a maritime state willing to make an important contribution to Arctic scientific cooperation. (Solli, 2013) As noted, Japan has conducted polar research since the 1970s. In 1973 it founded the Centre for Arctic Research under the National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) and has established two observatories on Svalbard. Japan has carried out different research projects in the Arctic, such as the International Northern Sea Route Programme (INSROP) from 1993 to 1999, the Japan Northern Sea Programme, and the Future of the Arctic Project. (Tonami, 2012) Similarly, Japan has contributed to the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), one of the Arctic Council working groups. "[Japan] is willing to contribute actively and constructively to the work of the Council by providing expertise gained through scientific research activities." (Horinouchi, 2010) The Japanese Institute of International Affairs has recommended that the government that should use its financial means and technology in the field of resource exploration and take advantage of its expertise and technology to play a leading role in Arctic research. (Ohnishi, 2013) In this regard, according to Kazuyuki Shiraishi, Director-General of the NIPR:

> Arctic research is drawing attention in recent years in particular, along with growing interest in global warming. NIPR steadily implements the Arctic Climate Change Project as one of Green Network of Excellence (GRENE) programs in collaboration with various research communities. It is a big task for NIPR to elucidate the trend of the future Earth environment with detailed analyses of scientific data of polar research. (National Institute of Polar Research, 2015)

One of the major potential economic benefits for Japan is the opening of the NSR, as it would make travel to and from Europe shorter, safer, and cheaper. "In fact, being closest to the Northern Sea Route, Japan is interested in its development much more than any other Asian country. The distance from Yokohama to Rotterdam along the Northern Sea Route is almost 3,400 miles (43%) shorter than via the Suez Canal." (Valdai, 2014:54) The first transit of the LNG tanker, the Ob River, chartered by Gazprom, arrived at the

LNG terminal in Japan in 2012. The Japanese government, along with different ministries and institutes, has carried out feasibility studies of the route and the possibilities of using it for commercial shipping. In fact, the INSROP was carried out with Russia and Norway and was one of the first international programmes aiming to prove the viability of the NSR. At the same time, the opening of the NSR will increase traffic in Northeast Asia and particularly in the Sea of Okhotsk, and for Japan, this "[…] raises concerns about increased traffic and a sea power struggle". (Ishihara, 2012) According to a high command from the military, Japan's security fear is that "Accessibility to the Arctic could disrupt military balance in East Asia by making deliveries to the Pacific Fleet via the NSR." (Zolotukhin, 2013:34)

Japan's policies in the field of energy resources involve looking for opportunities to develop oil and gas fields in cooperation with the Arctic States, particularly with Russia, in order to improve its energy security. Nonetheless, scepticism remains high as the technological difficulties and harsh weather conditions may significantly increase costs. Similarly, the possible benefits of the NSR to Japanese businesses are still uncertain. They are aware that the ratio of a decrease in navigation distance will not be equal to the ratio of a decrease in transportation costs due to extreme weather conditions in the Arctic. "Uncertain, intermittent weather forecasting and the lack of reporting of icy ocean conditions also pose serious hazards for Arctic shipping." (Ohnishi, 2013:8) Based on current evidence, the business community still does not believe that there are significant opportunities in the Arctic, even if the ice-melting continuous. "For them, there are too many uncertainties to generate the kind of financial benefits that would encourage them to make substantial investments required to operate in the Arctic." (Tonami, 2012:134)

Unlike South Korea, there is no cross-ministerial organisation to deal with Arctic affairs. The government's ministries involved in Arctic issues are: the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Similarly, there are few universities and institutes conducting Arctic research, such as the NIPR, which is the hub of Japan's Arctic research, Japan's Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology and the Ocean Policy Research Foundation. (Tonami, 2012)

Partnership with Russia in the Arctic would not only help to strengthen bilateral ties but would be an opportunity for Japan to engage more in the region through cooperation with the most important player in the Arctic. “It will also give Japanese energy and maritime corporations and scientific institutions valuable Arctic access.” (Pourzitakis, 2014)

Cooperation with Russia in the field of infrastructure development and the organisation of navigation along the NSR may open opportunities for new projects. As noted, Japanese enterprises and institutions have already conducted feasibility studies for using the NSR, and the countries could partner in different projects aimed to rebuild and modernise the decaying infrastructure along Russia’s Arctic coast.

As in other cases, one of the main obstacles in cooperation with Russia may be Russia’s financial conditions, Russia’s business climate: icebreaking fees and navigation fees in particular. The latter could be the main point of contention between Russia and Japan in Arctic affairs. Japan thus needs to consider whether it will pursue “freedom of navigation” like the United States or will accept Russia’s littoral claims. (Ishihara, 2012) Russia and Japan held talks in 2013 about beginning commercial shipping through the Arctic Ocean; Russia even proposed simplifying the procedures for applying for use of the NSR. (House of Japan, 2013)

For Japan and Russia, partnership in the extraction of energy resources and research other sources of energy in the Arctic may also be attractive. Due to Russia’s lack of technology for mineral extraction and the troubled current relationship with the West, partnership with Japan in sustainable development of energy resources could be a new opportunity for cooperation, given Japanese know-how in energy extraction and Japan’s need to find alternative sources of energy.

Another field for cooperation is research. Russia-Japan cooperation in Arctic research started in the 1990s and has been developing. The first official discussions on cooperative research between Japan and Russia on the Arctic, following the recommendation by the Japan-Russia Joint Committee of Science and Technology Cooperation, took place in 2014 in Japan, and both sides discussed twelve different themes such as the effects of climate change, weather forecasting, ecosystems, and sea navigation.

(Joint Group of Japan and Russia on Arctic Research, 2015) Japan-Russia cooperation on Arctic research appears to be one of the more promising fields for bilateral cooperation.

The aim of Japan's Arctic policies is "[…] to build on the achievements it has made so far, maintaining its low-profile position as a non-Arctic or non-coastal state, while at the same time emphasizing Japan's past contribution to Arctic research." (Tonami, 2014:8)

6.4. Conclusions

Relations between Japan and Russia have fluctuated between increasing closeness and stagnation. The national interests of Japan and Russia are not in direct conflict with each other, and converge to a certain extent. It is in the interests of both countries to improve the bilateral relationship. "By all objective indicators, economic, geopolitical and security based, Russia and Japan need good relations." (Lukyanov, 2012)

Stable and good relations may develop parallel to negotiations over the disputed islands. Building mutual confidence is essential to reaching an agreement about this, and this can only be done through cooperation. A proper environment should be created so that both sides can reach a compromise. "If good relations with Russia could be seen as a goal in their own right, then in the long term might be progress on the islands, but as a by-product rather as the centerpiece of relations." (Kuhrt, 2007:162) Despite the fact that no progress has been made over the territorial issue in 70 years, cooperation in different fields has improved. Both countries are of strategic value to each other and have expressed their intention to strengthen bilateral ties. Such cooperation could be the catalyst for a possible resolution of the dispute, but even if it is not solved bilateral relations could make progress, and cooperation in Siberia and the RFE could be enhanced. Japan's technologies and investment remain important for implementing development programmes in Siberia and the RFE.

At his participation in the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in 2016, Abe suggested Putin: "Vladimir: let's make the Russian Far East region for export base in Asia and the Pacific by increasing productivity through the diversification of the Russian industry." (Kistanov, 2016) He also called on Putin to sign a post-war peace treaty and open a new era for Japan and Russia. Nonetheless, as Kistanov notes, it should not be

overestimated the willingness of Japan to participate in Russia's plans to develop its far eastern provinces as this willingness has clear limits. (Kistanov, 2016)

As argued, Abe relies on personal relations with Putin and considers him as the only way to achieve a breakthrough in the territorial dispute in favour of Japan. Abe has said that the only way to achieve a breakthrough on the territorial issue is to find a solution on the basis of trust between the leaders. (Kistanov, 2016) Putin has stated that if Russia achieved the same high level of trust with Japan as well as with China, it would be possible to reach a compromise on the territorial issue. Russia has reiterated that the 1956 declaration remains the basis of Russia's approach towards the resolution of the Kuril Island problem. Abe has proposed a 'new approach' and has recognized the importance of the 1956 declaration. "By doing so, the Japanese leader demonstrated not only initiative and reliance on strong personal ties with foreign leaders but also something that has long been missing from bilateral dialogue – a robust political will." (Murashkin, 2016) Abe's trip to Vladivostok in 2016 added substance to the 'new approach': "Instead of holding back cooperation until after progress on the territorial issue has been reached, he has decided that a better way to induce concessions from the Russian side is to achieve a higher level of bilateral economic and political ties in advance of territorial negotiations. This is the key feature of the 'new approach.'" (Brown, 2016)

In December 2016, Putin and Abe plan to hold a summit meeting in Japan in which they are supposed to discuss the territorial dispute and economic cooperation. A visit by President Putin to Japan has been on the agenda since 2013 but was impeded by the merger of Crimea with Russia and Western sanctions in response to the Ukrainian crisis. Nonetheless, this chapter showed how Russia's tensions with the West did not prevent Prime Minister Abe from meeting Putin in numerous occasions. Apparently, the meeting is historical chance and a lot is at stake for both. Irrespective of the results of the encounter, "the key challenge will be to maintain a long-term commitment and motivation after the summit, should the actual territorial negotiations gain traction." (Murashkin, 2016)

Russia's policies in Asia are guided by national interests. The development of Siberia and the RFE and their integration into northeast Asia is crucial in Russia's great power ambitions; it is in Russia's interests to have good relations with all players in the region to maintain a balance. Accordingly, the new model for the development of the RFE,

based on the development of exports oriented to the Asia-Pacific region, was launched by the government in 2013 in order to promote multinational participation in the region, particularly the development of Territories of Rapid Development. Nonetheless, this model has not yet succeeded.

Russia's regional growing dependence on China changes the regional balance insofar as it makes China look like a potential menace to Russia's great power identity. Russia not only wants to remain a key partner to China but to be an indispensable and independent player on the key issues in Northeast Asia for reasons of its identity as a great power. By the same token, exclusive Chinese economic presence in the RFE could potentially endanger Russia's sovereignty over its eastern provinces. In this sense, a partnership with Japan could actually reinforce Russian sovereignty over the region while at the same time protecting its own security interests in Northeast Asia and increase its status in the region. The territorial dispute, however, appears to be a main impediment in this endeavour. As this thesis argues, sovereignty and territorial integrity are central notions to the Russian state. Sovereignty is a key element in Russia's foreign policy, and in particular the external relations of Siberia, as it is closely linked with Russia's great power ambitions. Therefore, Russia maintains its traditional position on relations with Japan regarding the territorial dispute.

> In May 1961 when I took over power as the leader of the revolutionary group, I honestly felt as if I had been given a pilfered household or bankrupt firm to manage. Around me I could find little hope of encouragement. The outlook was bleak. But i had to rise above this pessimism to rehabilitate the household. I had to destroy, once and for all, the vicious circle of poverty and economic stagnation. Only by reforming the economic structure would we lay a foundation for decent living standards.
>
> *Park Chung-hee*

CHAPTER SEVEN

Russia- South Korea

South Korea is strategically important for Russia, particularly in the development of Asiatic Russia, and to balance its foreign policy in Northeast Asia, thus avoiding overreliance on China and bringing capital and technology that would greatly contribute to the development of the region. Russia's goals in the Korean peninsula include: establish a peaceful international environment for national development; a peaceful solution of the North Korean issue; increase the country's influence in the region; and improve economic ties to develop the RFE.

In spite of different approaches to some international issues, there are no serious contentious issues that could thwart the development of bilateral ties. Nevertheless, present development of the bilateral relation does not always correspond with the high expectations set by both countries.

Arguably, the Republic of Korea is not only important in Russia's long-term plan to develop and improve living conditions in Asiatic Russia and advance its integration into Northeast Asia: it can reinforce Russia's Asian identity and therefore partly legitimate its great power ambitions in Northeast Asia. As Russia aspires to be a key player in regional issues for reasons of its identity as a great power, it does not want to be marginalized from Korean matters and therefore it has attempted to preserve the status on issues on the peninsula by maintaining a neutral position between South Korea and North Korea. Accordingly, Russia has proposed large-scale trilateral projects with North Korea and

South Korea. These projects are deemed to increase the influence of the country in the region and they could eventually link the peninsula with Russia and Eurasia.

This chapter is organised as follows: (1), it briefly depicts the background of present Russia-South Korea relations; (2), it briefly reviews the political and economic determinants of the bilateral ties; then (3), the chapter focuses on the bilateral relations at regional level and the place of Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic within the overall Russia-South Korea relations. Finally, (4), this chapter concludes by reflecting upon the relevance of Siberia and the RFE in the future of the Russian-South Korean relations.

7.1. Background

The peninsula of Korea became the host of a unified nation under the Koryo dynasty in the tenth century. Historically, Korea has been surrounded by the Empires of China and Japan, and later by the Russian Empire. By the thirteen century Korea had become a tributary to Beijing, while The *Choson* or *Yi* dynasty ruled the country. From that time until the nineteenth century, Korea carried out an increasingly isolationist policy that resulted in its being known as the *Hermit Kingdom.* First communications between Russia and Korea date back to 1246 in Karakorum. Official documents establish the beginning of mutual acquaintance in the seventeenth century. (Umetbaev, 2013) At that time, Russia and Korea did not share a border; only in 1860 was a common seventeen-kilometre frontier between the Russian Empire and Korea established as a result of the Treaty of Peking (1860), in which Ussuria and Amuria were ceded to Russia. During the implementation of the Treaty, the Russians ensured that the border would extend to Korea, thus preventing a Chinese coastline in the Pacific North. Nonetheless, the demarcation of the new border between Russia and Korea along the last 17 kilometres of the Tumen River did not lead automatically to the establishment of formal relations between both nations. (Map 9) In 1860 Russia approached to Korea and attempted to establish dialogue but it did not succeed. (March, 1996:162) Official diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Korea and the Russian Empire were established only in 1884 when the Mutual Commercial Protection Agreement was concluded. As we explain in Chapter Three, as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese War, China signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 in which it

recognised the independence of Korea and the end of the tributary system with it. Subsequently, contact between Russia and Korea rapidly developed and Russian influence and interest in Korea grew. Following the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, and the formal annexation of the Korean Empire into the Empire of Japan in 1910, relations practically came to an end.

As a result of the Second World War, Korea was detached from Japan and the peninsula was divided into North and South by the USSR and the United States. In 1948, the Republic of Korea (ROK) was established in the south with the support of the US, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was founded in the north with the assistance of the Soviet Union. (Map 17) The Korean War only accentuated the division between the two states, resulting in the USSR and other socialist countries supporting the North and not recognising South Korea as a sovereign state; Soviet-South Korean relations were halted for more than two decades, and only in the 1970s did contact between both countries resume, however unofficially. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the subsequent deterioration of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the shooting down of the Korean 747 Airliner by the USSR in 1983, led to a strain in relations.

Gorbachev's new Asian policy bolstered Russia's ties with Asian countries and led to an improvement of economic and political ties with South Korea. Both countries saw economic and political benefits in upgrading their bilateral relations, and thus official diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the ROK were established in 1990. The USSR began to play an active role in promoting inter-Korean relations; (Lee, 2001) the most tangible result was North and South Korea becoming full members of the United Nations in 1991, something previously rejected by North Korea, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Meanwhile, economic relations developed rapidly between the ROK and the USSR.

The demise of the Soviet Union brought many prospects for cooperation. President Yeltsin visited South Korea in 1992 to enhance political and economic ties. Both countries signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. During the visit, Yeltsin declared that Russia's military aid to North Korea would stop, and noted the need to end the Soviet-North Korean Alliance Treaty of 1961. (Lee 2001, Shin, 2014) There were very high expectations, and both sides were

overly optimistic in regard the future of the bilateral ties; however neither side had sufficient knowledge of the other. (Lee, 2001, Toloroya, 2010, Ivashentsov, 2013, Shin, 2014) South Korea expected more support from Russia regarding North Korea, and even suggested a strategic partnership in which Russia would side with South Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, something that was rejected by Russia. By the same token, Russia expected more benefits from economic cooperation with South Korea, but South Korean businesses were reluctant to make large investments in Russia. (Toloroya, 2010) The high expectations rapidly declined, and during the second part of the 1990s the bilateral ties reached a very low point. At the same time, Russia's relationship with North Korea worsened severely and its former influence over the country was lost. This resulted in Russia being dismissed from issues on the peninsula. For instance, Russia was excluded from the Four-Party Talks that aimed to resolve the first North Korean nuclear crisis.

Russo-South Korean relations recovered in the 2000s and since then they have dramatically improved, economic ties have developed and regular political dialogue has progressed at all levels without hiatus. The relationship has remained unaffected by the presidential transitions, and Presidents Dmitri Medvedev and Vladimir Putin on the Russia side, and Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-hye on the South Korean side, have continued the tradition of regular meetings to exchange views on international and bilateral issues.

Following the call of Vladimir Putin and Roh Moo-hyun in 2004 for a constructive development, (Shin, 2014) President Lee Myung-bak and President Dmitri Medvedev confirmed the high priority for both countries for developing ties in Moscow in 2008. In a ten-point joint statement released by both parties, the two Presidents agreed to upgrade their bilateral relations to a "Strategic Cooperative Partnership". Similarly, Lee and Medvedev signed a series of MOUs promoting bilateral cooperation across the board in economy, politics, diplomacy, security, defence, energy and aerospace and polar development. (KOCIS, 2008) In a like manner, Presidents Lee and Medvedev agreed in 2010 to upgrade the strategic partnership for future cooperation, and pointed out key areas with strong prospects for bilateral cooperation. (Kruglov, 2010)

In 2013, the Russian President Vladimir Putin visited South Korea and held summit talks with President Park Geun-hye. Both presidents saluted the 'dynamic progress' made in different fields such as politics, economics, science, technology and culture. In addition, Presidents Putin and Park both "expressed their will to further advance their strategic partnership in a future-looking, mutually beneficial manner by realising the two countries' development potential." (IA REGNUM, 2013) The visit included an extensive agenda and concluded a variety of documents as well as many memorandums of understandings and a joint statement.

It could be said that a broad legal framework had been settled between Russia and South Korea, for cooperation. As the Russian International Affairs Council notes, "The two countries have signed agreements on trade, investment protection, fisheries, double-taxation, military equipment supplies, nuclear energy uses for civil purposes, cultural exchange, prevention of illicit, unreported and unregulated fisheries and other areas." (Ivanov, 2013:10) The intergovernmental Korea-Russia Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation is very active and integrates several industry-related committees and sub-commissions. For instance, the 13th meeting which took place in 2013, the first after Presidents Park and Putin assumed office, included representatives from 14 Korean ministries and representatives from 15 Russian ministries. (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013)

Russia-South Korea bilateral relations have shown noteworthy furtherance since their normalisation in 1990. Many achievements have been accomplished in the fields of security, politics, and economy. It is worth noting that both nations have almost no historical issues that can hinder further cooperation, as is the case with other Northeast Asian countries.

7.2. Determinants

7.2.1. Political

The summit meeting between Presidents Putin and Park in 2013 set the grounds for the development of bilateral ties in the mid-term. Under Putin´s presidency Russia has

developed a new Asia-Pacific strategy in order to rebalance its foreign policy with its main task of developing Siberia and the Russian Far East, and integrating it into Northeast Asia. In the same way, South Korea's President Park proposed her *Eurasia Initiative* in 2013 at the Global Cooperation in the Era of Eurasia conference in Seoul, which consists of linking energy and logistics infrastructure across Eurasia to connect it as a single continent through rail networks, oil and gas pipelines, and electricity grids. According to the joint statement released after the summit:

> President Park explained to the Russian leader how important Korea-Russia cooperation is as Seoul follows through on its policies to strengthen Eurasian cooperation. The Russian president emphasized that Moscow regards its cooperation with Seoul as very important, mentioning his government's development projects in the Russian Far East and in Siberia and his economic reform plans. (KOCIS, 2013b)

The *Eurasia Initiative* is an ambitious project that aims to transform Eurasia into one continent. During the summit, Park told Putin about her dream of "express travel from Busan to Europe via Russia", a 'Silk Road Express' that would connect rail and road networks from Korea's Busan to Europe through Russia. (Vorontsov, 2015) Similarly, Park stressed the importance of new sea routes such as those of the Arctic Sea. (Choi, 2013) As a matter of fact, this idea coincides with Russian efforts to promote the Northern Sea Route across the Arctic as a viable alternative maritime route. According to Park, the NSR could complement new Silk Road projects as a new 'maritime Silk Road'. (Vorontsov, 2015)

Putin has expressed its support for Park's *Eurasia Initiative* because it coincides with Russia's orientation towards Asia. It could be said that both Presidents believe in a possible synergy between Russia's turn to Asia, and it longstanding effort to develop Siberia and the RFE, and the *Eurasia Initiative*. Within this framework, it is suggested that Siberia and particularly the RFE could provide South Korea with the resources to maintain and improve its economy, while developing Russia's east. At the same time, the participation of North Korea could encourage reforms and economic development within that country and help to bring stability to Northeast Asia and connect the ROK by land to Eurasia. Indeed, South Korea has been effectively cut off from the mainland for the last seventy years and has essentially become an island, and cooperation with Russia and North Korea could build a bridge from the island to the mainland. Cooperation with Russia is therefore crucial. As a Korean scholar notes: "The importance of Russia to South Korea

goes beyond the issues of peace on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Cooperation with it will restore some of its [South Korean] lost identity of a mainland state by opening access to Eurasia." (Jong, 2013)

President Putin has been proposing three tripartite large-scale projects between Russia, North Korea, and South Korea for the last 15 years, which could eventually link South Korea with Russia and Eurasia: the reconstruction of the Trans-Korean railway and linking it to the Trans-Siberian railway; a pipeline from Russia to South Korea traversing North Korea; and linking the electricity grids from Russia to South Korea via the North.

By the same token, President Park announced the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) in 2013. The initiative is an essential element of the broader *Eurasia Initiative* and it aims to move beyond the Asian Paradox towards peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia. According to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Asia Paradox is the disconnection between growing economic interdependence between Asian countries on the one hand and backward political and security cooperation on the other hand. (MOFA, 2013) Thus, the NAPCI pushes to move forward and has devised a process to build multilateral dialogue, cooperation, and trust among NEA countries. Russia welcomes this idea as it has been supporting effective multilateral dialogue and cooperation to address the conflicts in the region. At the summit:

> The two presidents agreed to enhance cooperation in politics and security in a strategic, mutually beneficial manner in order to achieve co-prosperity for both countries and to build peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. […] The two leaders noted the mutual understanding of the need to consolidate peace and stability in northeast Asia by building trust and reduce tension. In this regard, the parties welcomed the constructive achievements of Russia and the initiative of the President of the Republic of Korea Park Geun-Hye on peace and security in northeast Asia, which is important for building mutually beneficial multi-level cooperation in the region in order to consolidate peace and security, and agreed to intensify cooperation in this area. (IA REGNUM, 2013)

The *Eurasia Initiative* and NAPCI aimed to set the grounds for cooperation in Northeast Asia, and fit with Russia's shift to the east and its concept of peace and cooperation in NEA. This was attested during the summit between Presidents Park and Putin. "The true significance of the visit lies in the fact that for the first time the two countries found common ground in their respective concepts of promoting Eurasian integration and Northeast Asian security." (Toloraya, 2013)

These concepts go in hand with the peace and trust building process in the Korean peninsula, in order to encourage the DPRK to engage the international community. Within this framework, an advance in inter-Korean relations was essential.

Russia and South Korea firmly advocate a nuclear weapons-free peninsula, and are strongly opposed to North Korea's nuclear programme. At the summit in 2013, Presidents Park and Putin agreed to work towards resuming the six party talks, pointing out that North Korea should follow the 2005 Joint Statement in which the six parties agreed to peacefully achieve the goal of the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, and noting that a North Korean state building independent nuclear missiles and capabilities was unacceptable. According to the joint statement:

> The two sides reconfirmed their stance against the independent line that North Korea takes. They emphasized that North Korea cannot have a nuclear missile capability, in accordance with the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and also that their nuclear program is against the international community's demands and the U.N. Security Council's resolutions. Both countries stressed that North Korea should abide by its international obligations and promises, as evidenced at U.N. Security Council resolutions as well as at the 2005 joint statement signed by China, North Korea, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the US In accordance with the 2005 joint statement, Korea and Russia agreed to make an effort to resume the six-party talks. (KOCIS, 2013b)

Similarly, Presidents Putin and Park emphasised the importance of the inter-Korean trust-building process:

> President Park Geun-hye explained her trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula, an initiative to achieve a secure peace by building and solidifying trust between the two Koreas. President Vladimir Putin pledged Russia's support for the Korean trust-building process and described it as an important step toward a better relationship between South and North Korea, as well as toward regional peace, security and stability. In response, President Park gave a positive review of the constructive role Russia, as host country, plays in the Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism of the six nations. (KOCIS, 2013b)

Both countries are interested in mutual cooperation to ensure stability and security on the peninsula and agree that initiating a trust-building process is fundamental in this endeavour. Despite this, Russia's and South Korea's policies and interests concerning North Korea diverge in certain aspects as we will further describe.

As part of this trust-building process, since the 2000s Russia has proposed a new paradigm: large-scale Russia-North Korea-South Korea projects such as building a gas pipeline from Russia to South Korea via North Korea, and reconstructing and linking the

Trans-Korean railway to the Trans-Siberian railway, thus facilitating the transit of cargo between South Korea and Russia via the DPRK. According to Alexander Zhebin from the RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies this shared strategy between Russia and the ROK may effectively lay the grounds for different cooperation projects:

> President Putin said Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and in general Russia's Eurasian idea greatly coincides with the idea of South Korea, and they open several possibilities. At least, politically, our position (Russia) from the point of view of the realisation of these transport corridors has brought both countries closer, and even in the words of President Putin, they coincide. Unfortunately, so far, South Korea has not taken part in these projects. (Interview 4)

Putin has therefore stated that trilateral cooperation should not be held hostage by politics but be a unifying and reconciling factor. (Ilyashenko, 2013)

The summit meeting between Presidents Park and Putin in 2013 not only served as a framework to discuss the countries' national strategies and regional issues, but during the visit, an agreement was signed between the two parties for visa exemptions on visits shorter than 60 days. "The ROK government, recognizing an urgent need to expand people-to-people exchanges with Russia in order to further advance its strategic and cooperative partnership with the country, had actively pursued the Agreement and signed it on the occasion of Russian President Putin's visit to the ROK." (KOCIS, 2013) According to Sergei Sevastyanov: "the signing of this agreement is a breakthrough given the fact that it was the first of its kind signed between Russia and a northeast Asian country; it reflects the high level of relations." (Interview 14) The summit also included deliberation of the establishment of cultural centres in each other's capital, this aimed to promote economic and cultural exchanges between both nations. Both Presidents agree that "[…] these agreements would help extend people-to-people and cultural exchanges and lead to a better understanding between the peoples of both countries. This would further help advance bilateral cooperation." (KOCIS, 2013b) According to Saint Petersburg scholar Rimma Tangalicheva, "both countries are trying to set an example of cooperation in non-governmental areas. He believes that social and cultural ties have been constantly improving in recent years." (Interview 18) This can be seen in the different exchange programmes for university students, and other cultural exchanges, such as the recent unveiling statue of Pushkin in Seoul, and the planned unveiling of a statue of Park Kyung-ni in Saint Petersburg.

In Russia, South Korea is seen by the leadership and the public alike as an important and non-hostile neighbour with whom good relations can be developed in the long-term. (Toloroya, 2010) In general, it could be said that the image of South Korea in Russia is positive. In contrast, the image of the USSR in South Korea during the Cold War was negative, and although current perceptions of Russia in the country have improved they are based on the media and clichés. (Ivashentsov, 2013) It could be said that while South Korea's image in Russia is 'positive', South Korean's opinions of Russia are more 'neutral' or even indifferent. "Despite the geographical proximity, it cannot be said that in Korea there is a genuine interest in Russia and Russian affairs." (Lankov, 2014)

Russo-Korean bilateral relations have steadily improved and the trend is likely to continue, and both sides call for a strategic partnership, nevertheless, it can be argued that it is not a strategic one. (Bae, 2010; Ivashentsov, 2013; Shin, 2014; Toloraya, 2010) "Yet the general consensus is that ROK-Russia relations have not yet reached the level of an actual "strategic cooperation partnership" in practice and appear unable to move beyond official pronouncements to actual implementation." (Bae, 2010:10) There are three main questions that prevent Russia and the ROK from moving into a strategic partnership: the North Korean issue, the divergent approaches to global issues, and the ROK's alliance to the United States.

As we have already explained, Russia and South Korea have different approaches to the North Korean issue. This hinders bilateral cooperation in global and regional security, and economic relations, as we will further illustrate in this chapter.

Russian and South Korean global strategies differ, and what is more, there is no common understanding in most international issues, and no coordination of foreign policies, as in the case of Russia and China, and the US and the ROK. The voting pattern in the United Nations illustrates this: Russia and South Korea ordinarily do not vote together on contentious matters, whereas the ROK sides with the US, and China follows Russia.

Russia believes that the military alliance led by the US in Northeast Asia and the system of military bases cannot be the grounds for multilateral security cooperation in the region, and does not guarantee security and stability in Northeast Asia. Meanwhile, South Korea is essential to the US alliance system, and what is more, the ROK-US alliance is a 'sacred thing' for South Korea. (Lankov, 2014) South Korea believes the alliance is

indispensable vis-à-vis the North. As South Korean scholars stress, Russia "[…] must understand that large-scale North Korean provocations against the South are deterred by the US-ROK alliance." (Bae, 2010:17) According to the Mutual Defence Treaty signed in 1953 by the US and South Korea, both countries are in a military alliance which entitles the US to place its land-based naval and air forces in South Korea. Currently there are about of 30,000 US service members in the combined forces. According to Zhebin, it could therefore be argued that "militarily and politically South Korea is not completely sovereign." (Interview 4)

One of the most acute issues in security was the recent decision by South Korea to host the US missile defence system THAAD, which caused a negative reaction from Russia and China in particular. Putin has underlined that the appearance of the US missile defence systems is not conducive to stability in the region. South Korea has remarked that these complexes are not directed against Russia and THAAD system is only a reaction to North Korea's missile and nuclear tests.

The strengthening of the US-ROK and in particular South Korea's military and political dependence on the US, and China's closeness to Russia, narrows the field of cooperation between both countries to a certain extent, not only in security and politics, but in economics, as will be further described in this chapter. The Ukraine crisis in 2014 has also deepened the divisions between both countries' and according to Russia's foreign minister the United States effectively attempts to block contacts and the development of relationships between Russia and all other countries, and undoubtedly South Korea is no exception. US influence in the country is very strong, and the growing conflict between Russia and the US has impacted Russo-Korean bilateral relations. As Alexander Zhebin notes: "The absence of President Park at the Opening Ceremony of the Sochi Olympics in 2014, and the postponement of Park's visit to Russia after Putin's visit to the South illustrates this situation." (Interview 4)

7.2.2. Economic

South Korea has become Russia's third largest economic partner in Asia and is often seen by the Russian elite as a balancer in Russia's relations with China and Japan. Russo-Korean

economic bilateral ties have constantly improved, particularly in the last 20 years. The total trade turnover between Russia and the ROK has grown continuously since the initiation of the bilateral trade in 1979, when it totalled $11.6 million. In 1992, the volume of trade accounted for $193 million, and since then has continually grown, from $2.8 billion in 2000, $7.8 billion in 2005, $17.6 billion in 2010, reaching a total value of $25.8 billion in 2014. In 2014, Russia ranked ninth among South Korea's trade partners, behind China, when its total trade with South Korea totalled $235 billion, United States $115 billion, Japan $85.9 billion, Saudi Arabia $44.9 billion, Australia $30.7 billion, Taiwan $30.7 billion, Hong Kong $29 billion, and Germany $28.9 billion; but ahead of important partners such as Indonesia and Singapore. (Data from Korea Customs Service, 2015)

Russia's exports to South Korea have increased in the last 22 years, from $70 million in 1992, to $9.8 billion in 2010, and to $15.6 billion in 2014. In the same manner, South Korea's exports to Russia have grown, from $11 million in 1992, to $7.7 billion in 2010, to $10.1 billion in 2014. (Data from Korea Customs Service, 2015)

Possessing few natural resources, South Korea followed trade-oriented industrialisation under the presidency of Park Chung-hee who set in motion the Heavy and Chemical Industrialization Strategy (HCI) in 1972, an export-oriented model towards becoming industrially self-sufficient that focused on developing six key industries: automobiles, chemicals, electronics, machine tools, shipbuilding, and steel. (Bennett, 2014) The export sector was thus eventually dominated by the *Chaebols,* family-owned firms supported by the government that ultimately became multinational corporations such as LG, Samsung, Hyundai, and Daewoo. Consequently, the ROK emerged as one of the highest industrialised nations in the world.

The combination of a lack of natural resources and a large manufacturing sector resulted in South Korea importing large amounts of natural resources, specifically energy. Indeed, the country imports practically all the energy resources it consumes, 97 percent. This situation compels South Korea to search for energy resources to produce finished products that are in turn exported.

As in the case of China and Japan, the structure of the bilateral relationship between Russia and the ROK reflects the role of the two countries in the world economy. In 1996, the total value of exports from Russia to the ROK was $1.8 billion, 45.7 percent of the total

was steel and metal products, 21 percent was agricultural and fishery products, 19 percent chemical product, and 5 percent machinery and vehicles. The exports from South Korea to Russia were valued that year at $1.9 billion, 51.8 percent was electronic and electrical products, 14.7 percent machinery and transport vehicles, 13.1 percent primary products, and 9 percent clothes and textile. (Lee, 2001) In comparison, Russian exports to South Korea in 2012 totalled $11.3 billion, 79.2 percent of the total were fuel, mineral, oil, and oil products; 8.9 percent metals and metalware; 7.2 food products and agricultural supplies; 1.8 percent timber, pulp, and paper products; and 1.4 percent machinery. South Korea's exports to Russia were valued at $11.1 billion in 2012, when machinery equipment and motor vehicles accounted for 77.3 percent of the total exports, 10.9 percent chemical products, metal and metalware 5.2 percent, and textile products 1.6 percent. (Suslina, 2013)

As one of the world's leading energy exporters Russia is a logical partner for the ROK. As with China and Japan, energy is one of the prominent fields for bilateral economic cooperation. South Korea is one of the major importers of oil in the world, and the second biggest importer of LNG, and looks to diversify its supplies. For instance, 80 percent of South Korea's imports of oil and 59 percent of its total imports of natural gas are shipped from the Middle East. (Bennett, 2014) The ROK is interested in regionalising energy resource imports, and Russia is the natural partner for this. Building a gas pipeline from Russia to South Korea across North Korea to transport 10 billion cubic meters of gas annually to provide long-term energy supply is seen as a win-win solution. The idea has been repeatedly proposed by Russia since 1989. In 2011 Gazprom and the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) signed a memorandum of understanding for laying a pipeline to the Korean peninsula via the DPRK, (GAZPROM, 2009) however, given the political situation in the peninsula the plan is still to be set. Similarly to Russia-China and Russia-Japan energy ties, Russia-Korea energy cooperation ranges from economic goals to geopolitical interests. At present, Russia-ROK energy cooperation remains at the initial stage and there is plenty of room for cooperation. We will further look into this in the next section of the chapter.

Apart from energy, there are other important fields for economic cooperation. In the 13th Meeting of the Korea-Russia Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation in 2013, both countries discussed several proposals to broaden

cooperation across different sectors, not only energy and other natural resources, but trade and investment, infrastructure, agriculture, construction, health and medical care, culture, and tourism. (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013)

Indeed, cooperation in science and technology is a fundamental part of bilateral cooperation and both countries have placed strong emphasis on this. It is in the interest of both countries to synergise Russia's expertise in aviation, space technology, and nuclear energy; and South Korea's knowledge in high-technologies, electronics, car manufacturing, among other things. (Samsonova, 2013) Cooperation in science and technology has developed steadily and the Korea-Russia Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation has been discussing promising areas of cooperation and ways to strengthen collaboration in this field. At the 13th meeting of the Commission both parties agreed to "[…] lay the foundation for further cooperation, including collaborating on research in order to develop science-technology cooperation synergy between Korea and Russia." (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013:2) The joint Russian-Korean Technology Centre was established in South Korea, involving scientists from both countries. Russia and South Korea have promoted the Ko-Ru Science-Technology Innovation (STI) Forum as a model for bilateral cooperation and the construction of a 'Korea-Russia Joint Research Centre' at Skolkovo. (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013)

One of the most promising fields for partnership is space technology. The 2004 bilateral agreement between the ROK and Russia initiated the process that culminated in the first Korean cosmonaut travelling into space via the Russian Space Programme: Yi So-yeon orbited the earth onboard a Soyuz spacecraft in 2008. By the same token, Roscosmos provided assistance to South Korea in building the Naro Space Centre (South Korea's space port). Both countries also collaborated to produce the first South Korean space rocket carrying a Korean space launch vehicle. Following two failures, the KSLV-1 (Naro-1) with the SNSAT-2 was successfully launched into space. The first stage of this joint endeavour was constructed in Russia by the Krunichev State Research and Production Space Centre which bore all responsibility for the project. (Sidorenko, 2013)

In 2013 both countries announced their intentions to maintain cooperation in space technologies, emphasising that the construction and launch of the Korean space launch vehicle and the construction of the Naro Space Centre was due to bilateral cooperation.

Following the meeting with President Park in 2013, President Putin declared: "I think that cooperation in space exploration is a priority area for our countries. A jointly developed rocket was successfully launched at the start of this year from the Naro Test Ground, which was also built with Russian help." (President of Russia, 2013a)

Bilateral cooperation in nanotechnologies has also developed. In 2008 a MOU was signed between the state owned Russian Corporation on Nanotechnologies (RUSNANO) and the South Korean Ministry of Education. In 2011 RUSNANO, the Korean Ministry of Knowledge Economy's Korean Institute for the Advancement of Technology (KIAT), and the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), among others, established the Asia Nanotechnology Fund. The fund was established as a limited partnership with the ROK as it is based in Saint Petersburg, with RUSNANO investing half of the total capital: $50 million. According to RUSNANO, it aims to promote high-tech Russian products in global markets, and at least half the funds are to be invested in Russia. (RUSNANO, 2011)

For Russia and the ROK, another promising field for partnership is health and medical care. In 2012 the first Russia-South Korea forum on the interaction for the development of the medical industry took place. (Samsonova, 2013) In 2013, the Korea-Russia Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation agreed to strengthen collaboration in the health services, health and medical care, medicine and pharmaceutical sectors and to work towards concluding a Korea-Russia Healthcare Authority MOU. (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013) Similarly, in their joint statement, Presidents Putin and Park corroborated its "[…] mutual interest in continuing cooperation in the field of health and called for the early conclusion of an intergovernmental document […] [and] agreed to actively support the expansion of practical exchanges and cooperation in the organization of medical care, training, public regulation in the field of pharmaceuticals and medical products." (IA REGNUM, 2013) Similarly, both countries are cooperating on pharmaceuticals, particularly in clinical research and the development of new medicine. (see Samsonova, 2013)

Other important sectors for economic cooperation are agriculture, transport, infrastructure, and shipbuilding. Several agreements have been made in these fields and diverse projects are being implemented, while others are still being discussed. I will further examine this in the next section.

Bilateral cooperation is growing and the trend is likely to continue, but it remains below its potential. Energy and transport cooperation remains at a low level; but there are many prospects and huge opportunities in these fields that can be mutually beneficial. Undoubtedly, they are some of the most promising fields of cooperation. The practicality of some of the projects depends to a certain extent on the relations of both parties with a third player: North Korea. Cooperation in aviation and space technologies is important and it is likely to continue. At the same time, Russia is interested in increasing cooperation in technological development and high-tech areas. South Korea is considered by the Russian leadership and leading scholars to be one of the key partners for the modernisation of the economy. Both countries have set the groundwork through the joint commission and several projects are being put into practice, nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether they can develop a mutually beneficial partnership in these sectors.

7.3. Regional Issues

7.3.1. Political and Security Issues

Unstable inter-Korean relations and North Korea's nuclear problem have prevented the realisation of several projects between Russia and South Korea and remain a security threat to Russia's national interests. As Zhebin notes, from the situation in the peninsula, "[…] immediately adjacent to the Russian territory, the security of Russia and its progress directly depends on a bunch of Russia and multilateral economic projects, from which realisation we associate the implementation of socio-economic plans for the development of the far eastern regions of Russia." (Zhebin, 2014:19) Ergo, the DPRK plays an essential role in Russia-South Korean relations and Russia's bilateral ties with North Korea should be analysed.

The USSR was directly involved in the division of Korea, and during the Cold War, with ups and downs, it supported the North militarily, politically, and economically. In 1961 both countries signed the mutual defence treaty which stipulated the automatic military intervention of the parties in case of war. In the late 1980s, however, Gorbachev's new Asian policy, the reduction of Soviet aid to the DPRK, and the establishment of

official bilateral relations with South Korea, led to a decaying of Soviet-North Korean relations. After the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia further approached to the ROK and the West, and distanced itself from other socialist states like Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea. The military alliance between Russia and North Korea also expired in 1995 and was not renewed. This change in Russia's foreign policy was at great cost to relations with North Korea, which reached their lowest point in 1996 when Russia was declared by North Korea an 'enemy state'. (Shin, 2014) During the 1990s, the Russian Federation and the DPRK did not even maintain regular contact at an official level.

After assuming the presidency, Putin aimed to re-establish ties between Russia and North Korea. In 2000 the DPRK and the Russian Federation signed the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation, which would replace the 1961 alliance treaty. In the same year, Putin travelled to Pyongyang to meet Kim Jong-il in order to revitalise relations with North Korea. The visit was followed by the visits of Kim Jong-il to Russia in 2001 and 2002. The great improvements in political relations did not lead to a noticeable expansion in economic cooperation, however, and beyond the high level meetings and declarations, there were few tangible improvements, and relations stagnated. Following the withdrawal of North Korea from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, and mainly due to North Korea's efforts, Russia was included in the Six-Party Talks to deal the crisis, along with the USA, China, Russia, Japan, and the two Koreas. The North Korean nuclear test in 2006 did not help develop the relationship, and although "[…] disapproving of the nuclear blast, [Putin] he warned against driving North Korea into a corner and urged all the parties to return to the Six-Party Talks to resolve the crisis through dialogue." (Joo, 2009:116) Tensions in the peninsula remained high, with the *Cheonan* sinking in 2010, during the crisis, Russia took a neutral position and acted as a mediator. In 2011 Russia made new efforts to strengthen ties with North Korea and several projects were discussed during the summit meeting between Medvedev and Kim Jong-il in Russia, including energy and transport. Relations dwindled following the death of Kim Jing-il, and the ascension to power of Kim Jong-un.

The year 2014 was marked by a drastic improvement in bilateral ties. In the field of economics, several measures were taken that aimed to boost bilateral trade and make progress in bilateral issues. The Russia-North Korea Business Council was established;

Russia and the DPRK switched to settlements in roubles in their mutual trade; and the North Korean government approved the simplification of visa requirements and access to modern means of communication for Russian investors and employees. Similarly, the Russian Duma ratified an agreement made in 2012 to write off $10 billion of North Korea's Soviet era debt, which accounted for 90 percent of that debt. The rest of the debt, about $1 billion, would be reinvested by Russia in North Korea to develop several projects. (Keck, 2014a)

Low and high level meetings took place in 2014, including the visit to Moscow of the North Korean foreign minister Ri Su-yong, and the visit to North Korea by the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev. At the end of the year the secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, Choe Ryang-han, visited Russia as a special envoy from North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un. After the meeting with Choe Ryang-han, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that "Russia is prepared to have contacts at various levels with North Korea, including meeting at the highest level." (Kim, 2014) The possibility of a meeting between the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the DPRK's Leader Kim Jong-un was first raised, then Choe Ryang-hae met with President Putin. According to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), he delivered a personal letter from Kim Jong-un to Putin. After the meeting, Putin said that "Russia and the DPRK are close neighbours and have long-standing tradition of friendship and cooperation." (KCNA, 2015) It was later declared by the Russian Presidential Spokesman that Kim Jong-un accepted Russia's invitation and would visit Russia for the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union over the Nazi Germany, but the visit was cancelled in April 2015. (Panda, 2015; Seo, 2015) Lankov (2014) believes that there was a level of political exchange in 2014 that "both countries have not seen since the 1980s".

By approaching Russia, North Korea attempted to escape its diplomatic isolation and to move away from overdependence on China (Kim, 2014; Seo, 2015) with whom bilateral relations had decayed, particularly after North Korea's third nuclear test in spring 2013 and the execution of Jang Song-taek, a leading figure in North Korea's government and Kim Jong-un's uncle. This was shown by Xi Jinping's visit to the ROK in 2014, as it was the first time that a leader of China visited South Korea before visiting the DPRK. As had the Soviet Union, Russia has neither the intention nor resources to replace China as

North Korea's major sponsor and supporter. China's trade with North Korea in 2014 was valued at $6.4 billion, whereas the Russia-North Korea turnover was only $0.12 billion. (Lankov, 2014)

Russia's approach to the North greatly diverges from that of the South. Russia and South Korea support the idea of eventual peaceful unification between the North and the South. South Korea is more interested in a process of unification through absorption. Indeed, "there is a quite big conservative group in South Korea which believes that the North Korean regime should be demised." (Interview 4) In contrast, Russia supports the coexistence of both systems and their gradual integration leading to an ultimate unification. In Russia, South Korea's ideas of unification are seen more as 'a takeover of the North by the South'. (Ivashentsov, 2013)

Russia "[…] does not believe in the effectiveness of pressuring Pyongyang and has called for the gradual socialization and international integration of North Korea." (Lukyanov, 2013) The Russian leadership and leading scholars estimate that exerting military, political, and economic pressures to isolate and endanger the statehood of the North is not the solution; they are critical of South Korea's 'hard line policies' toward the North. For instance, it is often emphasised that according to the ROK's constitution, North Korea is considered a 'terrorist organisation'. (Interview 4) According to the Russian International Affairs Council, this depiction of North Korea does not contribute whatsoever to reducing inter-Korean tensions. (Ivashentsov, 2013) Zhebin suggests that "actions such as the prohibition of communist material, the banning of the distribution and reproduction of North Korean songs, even instrumental songs, forbidding access to North Korean websites, and so on, are not the proper actions of a self-conceived democracy." (Interview 4) Thus, Russian scholars tend to criticise the ROK's hard line policies toward the North. On the other hand, South Korea's leadership and elite estimate that the one with a 'hard line policy' is not the South but the North, which is developing nuclear weapons and missiles. (Bae, 2010) Indeed, in South Korea a considerable part of the elite still has a very conservative approach toward the North. (Interview 4)

The events that followed the *Cheonan* incident epitomised the different approaches to the North, and Russia disagreed with the South about exerting more pressure on the DPRK. The Russian navy began an investigation and concluded that the Cheonan was not

sunk by a North Korean torpedo therefore refuting the South's version that North Korea intentionally attacked the ship.

Russia has called to renew the Six-Party talks and remove the obstacles hindering their resumption without any preconditions. Russia assumes that denuclearisation should be the result of a trust-building process and not a precondition to it. "Russian experts see North Korean denuclearization as one of many tasks in a comprehensive settlement of decades-old Korean security problem, not as the end in itself." (Toloroya, 2010:53) Russia agrees with South Korea about a non-nuclear North Korean state, but believes that full denuclearisation in the short-term is unrealistic. For South Korea, peace and security on the peninsula could only be achieved after denuclearisation. For Russia trust and confidence building is more important.

As part of this trust-building process Russia has thus proposed the aforementioned trilateral projects. While being enthusiastic about trilateral cooperation Russia points out the unwillingness of the South to participate and effectively abstain. Russia complains that the South rarely replies to trilateral economic projects and does not take any action. In South Korea scepticism regarding trilateral cooperation is high, they make it clear that economic cooperation with the North is highly dependent on the political situation in that country and can be therefore easily disrupted. Still, Russia's rapprochement to North Korea is positively viewed in South Korea, not only because it could prompt trilateral cooperation, but because it could be an important factor in solving the security issue in the peninsula by checking the North and bringing it to the negotiation table. "South Korea must support a summit between Kim Jong-un and Putin and the expansion of actual economic cooperation between the North and Russia. If the North can rely on a country like Russia, it will refrain from extreme moves." (Kim Young-hie, 2014)

Russia indeed benefits from better relations with the DPRK, as approaching North Korea not only paves the way for the implementation of its ambitious energy and infrastructure projects across the peninsula but addresses its security concerns in the east. The country has its own security matters regarding the peninsula: due to the 17 kilometre border with North Korea and the proximity of the strategic city of Vladivostok, the nuclear and missile tests of the North cause serious concerns in Russia. The escalation of the conflict could harm the Russian population and threaten national security. The

advancement of Russia-North Korea ties is thus essential to the security of the RFE. "Russia's main regional interest has become maintaining peace and stability in North east Asia, and using geographical and resource advantages to expand its influence." (Shin, 2014:139) For Russia, a peaceful regional environment is necessary for the development of the RFE and given North Korea's proximity, any security crisis or instability would have very negative consequences on Russia's eastern provinces. It is therefore crucial for Russia's interests to establish a multilateral security framework and partnership for developing the RFE. As Alexander Zhebin states: "In Russia we are not interested in having a military conflict close to our borders in which one of the actors is de facto a nuclear country. We already have many conflicts near our borders so we are the least interested in a conflict in the Korean peninsula. It is in the interests of Russia that Koreans live peacefully and cooperate with one another." (Interview 4) Therefore, the Korean peninsula remains a source of concern for Russia. It should be emphasised, however, that Russia's concerns do not necessarily harmonize with China's. Russia and China are concerned by nuclear proliferation in the peninsula. Nevertheless, their interests diverge: one the one hand, it seems that it is in China's interests to maintain the status quo of a divided Korea, while for Russia a reunified peninsula would be potentially beneficial.

7.3.2. Economic Issues

Since the early 1990s, Siberia and in particular the RFE attracted the South Korean business community to a greater extent due to its vast resource base. South Korea plays a relevant role in Russia's long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Siberia and the Russian Far East and its integration into Northeast Asia. It can provide markets for Siberia's natural resources and it can greatly contribute to the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Russia is becoming strategically important for the South for security reasons, particularly to secure the supply of energy resources indispensable for the development of the country, and therefore it is interested in participating in the development of Russia's East. "The resource development of the Far East and Siberia is not only the lifeline of Russia future but also of significance to the future of the Korean economy because of Korea's geo-economic proximity to the region." (Bae, 2010:12)

Trade between the RFE and South Korea has gradually developed in the last decade. The share of the ROK in RFE's exports increased from 12.3 percent in 2006 to 32 percent in 2014. In contrast, the share of South Korea in RFE's imports decreased from 23.1 percent in 2006 to 10.6 percent in 2014. The share of the ROK in the overall external trade of the RFE passed from 18 percent in 2006 to 26.2 percent in 2014, reaching its highest point in 2007 when it accounted for 29.3 percent of the total. (Korolev, 2015)

The main field for Russia-South Korea cooperation in Siberia and the Russian Far East is energy. South Korean ambitions to diversify and secure its energy sources coincide with Russia's national strategy to diversify its energy exports. For the ROK it is imperative to improve its energy security, and for Russia to exploit new markets in Northeast Asia. Bilateral energy cooperation remains at a low level, however. For instance, in 2013 Russia accounted for only 4 percent of South Korea's total crude oil imports, behind Saudi Arabia which accounted for 34 percent of the ROK's total oil exports, Kuwait 16 percent, United Arab Emirates 12 percent, Iraq 10 percent, Qatar 9 percent, and Iran 5 percent. Similarly, Russia's share in South Korea's LNG exports is still low. In 2013, Russia's share in the ROK's LNG imports was only 5 percent, behind Qatar which accounted for 33 percent of the total, Indonesia 14 percent, Oman 11 percent, Malaysia 10 percent, Yemen 9 percent and Nigeria 7 percent. (Data from EIA, 2014a)

Russia is an important supplier of nuclear energy to the ROK (30%), along with the US and France, and shares a significant amount of South Korea´s coal imports (12%). (Data from EIA, 2014a)

One strategic field of Russia-South Korea energy cooperation is LNG. After deliveries of LNG started under the Sakhalin-II project in 2009, the share of Russia in South Korea's LNG imports grew from 0 percent in 2009 to 5 percent in 2013. As mentioned in Chapter Six, Russia is planning to drastically increase its LNG facilities in order to expand its exports to Asian countries, principally to South Korea and Japan. By 2020, Russia plans to have fouror five LNG projects producing 40 to 50 million tons of LNG per year. Amidst the current conflict between Russia and the West, bilateral LNG cooperation remains uncertain.

In this regard, Russia has proposed the construction of a gas pipeline from its territory to the ROK via North Korea. The idea of a Trans-Korean overland pipeline from

Russia to South Korea via the North goes back to 1989, and since the 1990s the project has been the subject of discussion. Indeed, several joint agreements and memorandums of understanding have been signed, and both countries have carried out diverse feasibility studies. In 2011, Russia and the ROK agreed on North Korea's participation in the project and Gazprom and Kogas signed a long-term road map for the Russia-North Korea-South Korea gas pipeline. Nevertheless, and beyond this, almost no achievements have been accomplished. (Jin, 2012)

The Trans-Korean pipeline would run from Primorskii Krai in Russia to the ROK across the DPRK and would connect to the already functioning Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok pipeline. The length of the pipeline would be around 900 km and it has been said that the annual capacity would be 10 billion cubic meters from major gas fields in Sakhalin and East Siberia. The estimated cost for its construction is $13 billion. (Jin, 2012)

At first glance, the pipeline appears to be in the interests of both countries. Supporters of the project have focused on the possible economic and political benefits of the pipeline's completion, as there is an apparent confluence of economic and political interests between both countries. South Korea is the tenth largest energy consumer in the world but does not have any pipeline connection, thus, it is one of largest importers of LNG. The country wants to diversify its natural gas imports, reduce transports costs, and secure gas delivery on a more stable and long-term basis. It is said that by importing natural gas from Russia through the Trans-Korean pipeline the South could save around 18-30 billion. Meanwhile, gas dependency on the unstable Middle East would decrease from 59 percent to 45, and dependence on South East Asia would diminish from 32 to 24 percent. (Jin, 2012) For Russia, the pipeline is part of a long term strategy to diversify energy markets from Europe to Asia, particularly gas, and to expand the export of gas resources in East Siberia. Similarly, the share of Russian gas imports to South Korea would increase from 7 to 30 percent.

Apparently, the pipeline's completion would be a win-win solution: it would be able to help to solve South Korea's energy problems and to diversify and expand Russia's energy exports, however, North Korea's related risks are said to be the main obstacles of the project at first glance. It is noted that North transit fees could be around $100 million, this would strengthen the regime and the incomes would support the current military and

political elites. Moreover, it is argued that the unpredictable and unstable North Korean regime would gain much power vis-à-vis the South and could threaten to shutdown the pipeline at any time. (Interview 4) The possibility of risks would be much higher in the Russia-North Korea-South Korea gas pipeline than in the Russia- Ukraine- Europe. In the former, potential disputes not only exist between the producer and the 'transitor' but between the 'transitor' and consumer. Unlike Ukraine, North Korea has no facilities for gas storage and would not be consumer but only a transit country, therefore it would have less to lose by disrupting the pipeline. (Lee Yusin, 2013)

Supporters of the project argue that its completion would be an important factor in settling North Korea's political problems and even contribute to the peaceful unification of both Koreas by improving ties and providing an institutional framework and a model for bilateral cooperation. They believe that the project is a win-win solution and "a golden opportunity" that is being missed due to the inter-Korean conflict and North Korea's nuclear problems. (Lee, 2014) Russia is often viewed as a balance of power, and North Korea's risks are said to be less significant due to the fact that it would provide big gains to North Korea, and that, moreover, an international project led by Russia would not be easy to disrupt. "The pipeline can be a political means of effectively controlling the North Korean factor." (Lee, 2014:21) According to a Semyon Korotchik from FEFU, Kim Jong-Il considered the pipeline project; he was concerned about North Korea's excessive reliance on China, thus, he made efforts to involve Russia in energy supplying to balance against China. Similarly, under the presidency of Kim Jong-un, North Korea has expressed its readiness to participate in the project with Russia and the ROK. (Interview 16)

Nonetheless, in South Korea the project is seen as unrealistic for the time being due to North Korea's issues. Other alternatives have therefore been proposed: such as an undersea pipeline from Russia to the South bypassing North Korea through the East and a Russo-Sino-Yellow sea route through the Shandong Peninsula. The first alternative is about 30 percent more expensive; and regarding the second option, South Korea believes that China wants to become the hub for Northeast Asia natural gas supplies and therefore does not support the Russo-Korean pipeline. It is in the interests of South Korea to form a partnership with Russia in order to counterbalance China's growing leverage. Of the three alternatives, South Korea thus believes that the Trans-Korean pipeline is the best option and

is therefore still being discussed. "The Russo-Korean Gas Pipeline is a political project which moves in tandem with the North Korean nuclear problem and inter-Korean relations which are by default in a state of military confrontation." (Lee, 2014:22)

Another proposed undertaking is the Trans-Korean railway. As explained in Chapter Two, Russia is interested in becoming a Eurasian bridge linking Europe and Asia and therefore it is actively promoting the connection of the Trans-Siberian railway to the yet to be reconstructed Trans-Korean railway, creating the longest land corridor from South Korea's port of Busan to Europe. The railroad would become a competitor to the Suez Canal routes reducing times from 45 to 13-15 days from Europe to Asia and vice versa. It would enable Russia to take advantage of its underused transit potential and generating annually $15 to $20 billion of revenues, and similarly it could greatly contribute to the development of the country's eastern regions. For the ROK the railroad would create the chance to deliver freight to Eurasia by land, thus converting Busan into the junction of a marine and intercontinental transit route. (Voronstov, 2010) By the same token, the railroad could develop into an alternative route for importing hydrocarbons and other raw materials, particularly from Russia. The route has been agreed: from Busan to the DMZ and then through the eastern segment of the North Korean railway to the Russian border, but the project faces several challenges that hinder its implementation. The idea is not new and has been discussed since the 2000s; however, specially financial and political factors hinder the development of the project. It is argued that the cost of the project is one of the main difficulties, as it has been estimated as $5-7 billion. (Vorontsov, 2010) North Korea's network would have to be practically reconstructed and Russia's and South Korea's networks should be improved to expand the existing capacity. This is arguably not the main problem, however, as in the case of the pipeline from Russia to the peninsula, the foremost matter is the North Korea's nuclear problem and the worsening of inter-Korean relations.

Russia and South Korea have reached several agreements concerning the project and at several summits the heads of states have emphasised the prominence of the project and the need to make further advances, nonetheless, beyond the agreements practically nothing has been done. As a Russian scholar highlights, "[…] the construction of the Trans-Korean railway remains an abstract idea which everyone acknowledges but nobody knows

how to put into practice. Each partner has a separate vision of the project's implementation." (Vorontsov, 2010)

Russia therefore had to undertake a pilot project only with the North: the Rajin-Khasan. (Interview 4) In 2008, the Russia state-owned company – Russian Railways– and North Korea's Ministry of Railways signed a cooperation agreement and established a joint venture, with 70 and 30 percent owned by Russia and DPRK respectively, destined to develop a pilot project: to modernise and build a container terminal in North Korea's north-eastern port of Rajin and reconstruct the railroad linking Rajin to the border Russian city of Khasan. (Lee, 2014) At the summit in 2013 between Presidents Park and Putin, the participation of South Korea in the projects was discussed and a memorandum of understanding was signed in the participation of South Korea in the Rajin-Khasan project. Previously, the South Korean consortium of Posco, Korail and Hyundai Merchant Marine had expressed interest in participating in the project by acquiring 50 percent of Russia's shares. (Kim Ji-yoon, 2014) In November 2014, 45,000 tons of Russian coal arrived at Pohang. The coal was transported through from the Russian city of Khasan to the North Korean city of Rajin, via the 54 kilometre-long Khasan-Rajin railway, and then shipped by a Chinese vessel. According to a South Korean official, "The project will be a good example for South Korean businesses interested in Siberia. Russia, and Siberia in particular, has a close economic relationship with North Korea, so South Korean companies that join the relationship will help both economic and political relations among all three countries." (Kim Ji-yoon, 2014) It seems that what Russia has done in this case is to focus on alternatives that are less costly to implement so as to attract South Korea's participation. For the Russian elite, the railroad would "[…] not only provide a cheap, fast, and secure way to transport goods and people across Eurasia, but also ease inter-Korean tensions, thus strengthening security and stability in the entire region." (Torkunov, 2013)

During the last decade, Russia and South Korea have signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding on the abovementioned projects, and mainly due to South Korea's reticence none has been implemented. In contrast to the former President Lee, President Park seems to be more optimistic about trilateral cooperation. Her Eurasia Initiative could serve as the catalyst for its realisation. The participation of South Korea in the Khasan-Rajin project - a Russian-North Korean undertaking to reconstruct the railroad

from the Russian border city of Khasan to North Korea's port Rajin- is a milestone and could be the first step in bringing South Korea back to the mainland. "Russia has sought to draw closer to the North while simultaneously reinforcing a new strategic cooperation relationship with the South." (Shin, 2014:141)

Beyond the abovementioned trilateral projects, there are other fields of cooperation which show more progress. One of the main fields is shipbuilding. Due to national and security interests, the industry has become one of the largest and most technologically sophisticated in the world. The major corporate shipbuilding companies are STX Offshore and Shipbuilding Corporation, Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME), Hyundai Heavy Industries, and Samsung Heavy Industries, which are four of the six largest shipbuilding companies in the world. South Korea is the second largest shipbuilding country in the world and its share in the world market is 30 percent, only behind China (50 percent). Thus, the ROK is seemingly the logical partner for developing shipbuilding in the RFE and offshore shipbuilding. (Cherkashin, 2014)

To create a new fleet and develop offshore infrastructure and civilian shipbuilding Russia decided to expand and redevelop the Zvezda shipyard in Bolshoi Kamen, Primorski Krai, into the Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex which is to become the largest shipbuilding complex in Russia. Rosneft and Gazprombank signed a memorandum of understanding with DSME and Russia's shipbuilder, Sovcomflot, to construct this shipbuilding and industrial cluster and to develop a Russian-Korean engineering centre by 2016 for shipbuilding and marine equipment for offshore projects. The complex would be able to build tankers, LNG carriers, icebreaking vessels, offshore construction vessels, and offshore platforms. (Shiptechnology, 2015)

The Zvezda project appears to be a good opportunity for Russia to upgrade its shipbuilding capacity and to modernise its fleet and the country's backward shipbuilding industry. Cooperation with the ROK in this field seems to be of paramount importance for Russia. By transferring its own technology and expertise, South Korea also expects to obtain access to Russian oil and gas projects and to obtain better deals in supplies."Russian-Korean cooperation on shipbuilding is a necessary success factor for the Russian Federation's plans to create a tanker fleet and infrastructure in order to develop offshore

deposits in the Far East and the Arctic." (Cherkashin, 2014) Effective cooperation in this field would strengthen the position of both countries in the Arctic.

Since 2009 South Korea has been developing a programme to support overseas agricultural projects and has used 10 percent of this budget for agricultural production for overseas projects, including projects in the RFE. In South Korea farmland is limited; the country produces only 30 percent of the grain it consumes. Hyundai Heavy Industries decided to make investment in arable land in Primorski Krai. (Blas, 2009) In fact, in 2011 it set up a second agricultural subsidiary business in the RFE near Vladivostok.

Even when there is growing economic cooperation between Russia and the ROK in the Far East and some fields are developing fast, trilateral cooperation is still a priority. For Russia it is beneficial that between the North and the South there exists a normal-minimal cooperation as it was the case in the beginning of the 2000s because "if we (Russia) said if there are not good relations between South and North Korea our projects are impossible to realise, that is why Russia is little by little pushing both countries closer so that they could finally start cooperation and normalise bilateral relations." (Interview 4)

There is a fundamental confluence of economic and political interests between Russia and the ROK, particularly in the fields of energy and transportation. North Korea's existence between both countries appears to be the main obstacle. On the one hand, Russia believes that once the projects were implemented, the North would be closer to the international community and could engage gradually with NEA countries. On the other hand, South Korea believes that once the projects are realised, North Korea's leverage would be drastically increased due to the fact that they would pass across its territory. Thus, an essential issue seems to be how to counterbalance the leverage North Korea could obtain from these projects and how to motivate them to comply. Until then there is no fundamental way to solve the problem. The potential threats to South Korea can be minimised and counterbalanced by the potential benefits, but until there is a common approach and a shared view of the North, which is extremely unlikely due to the constraints of the ROK-US alliance and amidst the conflict between Russia and the West, it will be very difficult to realise the projects and will take much longer before they could come into existence.

Prior to the crisis in the Ukraine, Sevastianov from FEFU suggested that "South Korea is the most prospective partner for the region, at least in Primosrki Krai. Unlike the

cases of China and Japan, there is no current or potential security and political tensions." (Interview 14) Since 2014 relations between Russia and the Republic of Korea have cooled, however, and therefore the interest of South Korean investors in partnering with Russia in the region has decreased. As Igor Makarov points out: "The ROK declared they disagree with Russia's position in Ukraine. Officially, nothing has changed in South Korea's position regarding Russia and the Russian Far East, but the whole climate of cooperation has worsened." (Interview 5)

As in the case of China and Japan, relations between Asiatic Russia and South Korea are inextricably connected to the overall bilateral Russia-South Korea relationship and therefore cannot be viewed as a separate issue. To see an increase in the participation of South Korea in the development of Russia's eastern provinces and in its involvement in the abovementioned trilateral projects, bilateral ties between Russia and the ROK should thus further develop, and this will not come as a result of the implementation of a new model for the development of Siberia and the RFE. The success of the new model depends to a great extent on the overall Russia-South Korea relations and consequently on those between Russia and the West. Due to the heavy reliance of South Korea on the US in international affairs, it thus seems that if US-Russian ties and in general relations between Russia and the West do not improve, it is highly unlikely that the ROK will intensify cooperation with Russia in its far eastern provinces, hindering Russia's strategy to become an Asian power.

7.3.3. Arctic Issues

Geographically, South Korea is not an Arctic state; nevertheless, it has several interests in the region. As were China and Japan, South Korea was granted observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013. Unlike China, South Korea's involvement in Arctic issues is generally welcomed and creates little concern: South Korea is technologically a highly advanced country, particularly in shipbuilding and offshore infrastructure, with a high level of scientific knowledge, and its political interests closely coincide with the interests of other Arctic states. Its position on Arctic governance "[…] is much moderate than that of China. (South) Korea does not insist on the equality of rights for the Arctic and non-Arctic

countries but wants to be confident than the regime to be created by the Arctic states will allow it to pursue its interests in a cooperative environment." (Valdai, 2014:56)

As a result of its acceptance in the Arctic Council as a permanent observer, the ROK articulated a strategy for the region and in 2013 announced the government's Arctic Policy Master Plan, outlining its economic, scientific, and political goals. On the basis of several other documents, the plan was developed through pan-government cooperation and government affiliated institutions. According to the Deputy Prime Minister Hyun Oh-seok, South Korea is taking the advantage of its status as an 'observer' country on the Arctic Council to enter new markets, and a 'comprehensive blueprint' has been drawn up to accomplish that aim. (KOCIS, 2013a) Indeed, it is the first East Asian state to outline a comprehensive Arctic strategy. Basically, the strategy contains four strategic goals: to boost the country's cooperation with Arctic states, strengthening South Korea's scientific research in the Arctic, develop a new Arctic business model, and improve legal and institutional infrastructure. These objectives are interrelated and should be viewed within the overall strategy.

Firstly, one of the goals of the country's Arctic strategy is to have active participation in the Arctic Council and developing bilateral ties. For the ROK, being involved in the Arctic's governance helps the country to play a role in global matters and to enhance South Korea's international profile. Thus, pride, national privilege, and the need to take a more active foreign policy are some of the reasons for South Korea to be involved in Arctic issues. (RIAC, 2013)

Secondly, South Korea has interests in science development and climate-related issues. As has been said before, the ROK places special attention on science, and thus, one of the main drivers for involvement in the Arctic is scientific research. According to the Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI), South Korea secures its national interests through scientific research, and thus, joint development and cooperation with other Arctic states on research activities is seen as a way to secure national interests. (Bennett, 2014) South Korea has a polar research programme realised by the KOPRI and it established the Dasan station on the Svalbard Archipelago in 2002 to undertake research on the Arctic Ocean. Similarly, the ROK built the research icebreaker ARAON and has announced the construction of a second icebreaker.

Global climate change concerns South Korea and it actively participates in research to promote green technologies and the sustainable development of natural resources. It believes the Arctic to be a 'barometer of climate change', and thus it puts emphasis on climate research and particularly climate change in the Arctic and its relationship to the Earth system and Northeast Asia in particular.

Shipping, shipbuilding, offshore infrastructure, and energy resources comprise the main economic interests of the ROK in the Arctic. As has been said, the country is cut off from the mainland, and therefore relies on maritime shipping for 99.8 percent of its exports and imports. This over-dependency on maritime imports and specifically on energy imports "[…] means that maintaining safely navigable shipping lanes free from disturbances is vital to state security." (Bennett, 2014:890) Along these lines, the opening of the NSR creates several expectations in South Korea, as it can serve as an alternative maritime route to that from the Middle East for the import of hydrocarbons and for exports to Europe. Additionally, transportation along the NSR could reduce fuel costs by 25 percent. For instance, if Arctic oil could replace just 10 percent of Middle East's oil, South Korea could save at least $1 billion in transportation costs. (Park, 2014)

Incidentally, as pointed out by Moscow scholar Makarov, "the NSR and extraction of energy resources in the Arctic is looked onwith special interest by South Korean building companies as it could increase the demand for icebreakers, ice-class vessels and tankers." (Interview 5) This is, "South Korea is interested in the economic benefit of Arctic shipping as it hosts the largest shipbuilding yards in the world." (Hong, 2011:53) South Korea's shipbuilders are among the most competitive firms in the world and have the potential for the construction of icebreakers and ice-class vessels and tankers to transport LNG along the Arctic. For instance, Samsung Heavy Industries have developed a 'double action vessel', a normal ship with the capacity of icebreaking. (Samsung Heavy Industries, 2015) It should be noted that since 2009, South Korea has built 100 of the 134 LNG tankers ordered worldwide. (Bennett, 2014) South Korean shipbuilding companies also posses the technology to built sophisticated ice-class vessels and are at the vanguard in technology to navigate in Arctic conditions. In fact, South Korea is already building carriers to transport LNG from the Arctic. In 2013 DSME signed an agreement with Sovcomflot to build up to

16 icebreaking liquefied gas vessels to transport LNG produced at the Yamal LNG project in Russia's north. (SHIP-TECHNOLOGY, 2013)

Business opportunities are not limited to shipbuilding and shipping, South Korea is also interested in joint cooperation with Arctic states for the sustainable development of natural resources as well as offshore engineering due to the large expertise of South Korean companies. Thus, "[South] Korea's Arctic strategy establishes participation in the long-term of the development of the resources of the Arctic and maritime transport." (Zolotukhin, 2013:24)

The ROK recognises the lack of immediate commercial benefits and understand that while "[…] engagement in the Arctic is expected to make an important contribution to the country's economy, some of the benefits have been exaggerated and many obstacles still must be overcome." (Park, 2014:63)

Establishing legal and institutional grounds for participation in Arctic affairs is a priority for South Korea. Thus far, seven government ministries and two agencies manage the country's Arctic activities: the Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Science, ICT and future planning, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Korea Meteorological Institution and Energy Administration, the Korea Maritime Institute, and the Korea Polar Research Institute. (Park, 2014)

For the South Korean leadership and scholars Russia is arguably the most important partner for the country in the Arctic, (Park, 2014; Sung, 2014) as it not only possesses the most abundant natural resources but the NSR passes along Russia's Arctic coast. Additionally, the current symbiosis between Russia's Asian strategy and South Korea's Eurasia Initiative paves the way for deepening cooperation in Arctic affairs.

Presidents Putin and Park agreed in 2013 on mutual cooperation in the development of the Arctic, its study, preservation of the environment, the use of the Northern sea route, and on strengthening cooperation in the new field, associated with the construction and operation of icebreakers and ice-class vessels. (IA REGNUM, 2013)

There is plenty of potential for cooperation in the Arctic between Russia and the ROK, and one of the most promising fields is shipping through the NSR. South Korea is attentive to the possibilities for future trade by shipping to and from Europe and Russia

through the Arctic; particularly for the import of energy resources and the export of manufactured goods. Cooperation with Russia in this matter is essential. Proposals have been discussed to collaborate by allowing South Korean vessels to use the NSR in its territorial waters or continental shelf region, with the involvement of the South Korean Ministry of Ocean Fisheries and the Russian Ministry of Transport. (Seok, 2013)

Similarly, South Korea could be part of a larger NSR stretching from Scandinavia, along Russia and down to Northeast Asia, and Busan could become a major port on the route for vessels into and exiting the NSR. South Korea is thus interested in investment and cooperation in the infrastructure along Russia's Arctic coast in order to improve port infrastructure in the RFE and therefore connect the Arctic, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the Sea of Japan. In 2012 the government announced a plan to invest $3.16 billion in offshore facilities and the Arctic coast by 2020. Both countries are working on developing an agreement on Far Eastern port development, as stated at the 13th Meeting of the Korea-Russia Joint Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation,

> Both sides agreed to continue to discuss utilizing the North Pole Route and participating in the development of coastal ports in the Far East Asia and North Pole regions. An agreement was reached regarding speedily concluding a 'Korea-Russia Port Development Cooperation' MOU to lay the foundation for stimulating Far East Asia port and distribution investment. (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2013:2)

Arctic cooperation with Russia embodies not only an alternative shipping route but a separate source of hydrocarbons to increase energy security. The ROK is interested in joint cooperation with Russia in the offshore extraction of energy resources, researching other sources of energy and exporting technologies for cooperation. For Russia, given the current state of bilateral relations, the lack of technologies for offshore deepwater mineral extraction, and the troubled current relationship with the West, partnership with the ROK in the sustainable development of energy resources appears to be a priority.

Nevertheless, there are potential challenges for bilateral cooperation in the Arctic that should be taken into consideration: Russia's financial conditions, Russia's business climate, icebreaking fees, and navigation fees in particular. The latter could the main point of contention between Russia and the ROK in Arctic affairs. To face these challenges, the Russia-South Korea Arctic partnership should be strengthened within the overall

framework of the bilateral relationship by devising new forms of cooperation such as a special Arctic Cooperation Committee to deal with these matters.

In sum, economic and scientific matters are at the core of South Korea's interests in the Arctic, however, political and legal issues are important, and meanwhile security concerns are minimal. "Among all Arctic-facing nations, it is Russia that Seoul views as the most fitting partner capable of providing it with access to the Arctic's raw material and transport and logistics resources." (Cherkashin, 2014)

7.4. Conclusions

Russia-South Korea bilateral relations have shown noteworthy furtherance since their normalisation in 1990. Both countries consider each other crucial and valuable strategically in pursuing their national interests. Many achievements have been made in the fields of security, politics, economics, and people-to-people. Arguably, the Eurasia Initiative proposed by South Korea's President Park Geun-hye, calling for energy and logistics infrastructure connecting South Korea and Eurasia coincides with Russia's long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Siberia and the Russian Far East, and its integration into Northeast Asia.

Russia and the Republic of Korea have repeatedly underlined their interest in developing and consolidating a strategic cooperative partnership. Similarly, the Russian leadership and scholars often refer to the ROK as an important economic partner for Asiatic Russia pointing out the large potential for bilateral economic cooperation. Nevertheless, it seems that the present development of the bilateral relation does not always correspond with the high expectations set by both countries. Russia calls South Korea to invest in the Territories for Rapid Development, in the ports of the RFE and the Arctic, among others. South Korea, however, is reticent to invest in projects in the RFE. As South Korea's specialist Rimma Tangalicheva, Saint Petersburg State University, notes: "(South Koreans) They do want to participate in development projects in the Russian Far East. They are very interested. However, Russia is not ready to cooperate to the degree South Koreans want. They want to develop economic ties more intensively, but Russia is still not ready for this. Russia does not want to open the region yet." (Interview 18)

Park Geun-hye visited Vladivostok in September 2016 to take part in the Second East Economic Forum. Presidents Park and Putin reiterated their already known positions, recalling the differences on a number of issues. According to a Tangalycheva, the meeting did not bring anything new as "both leaders only smiled, shook hands, but nothing else." (Interview 18) One of the most important sections of the Russia-South Korea summit in Vladivostok was the economy. Both sides signed a total of 24 of MOU's of possible cooperation in different areas: trade, investment, shipbuilding, agriculture and maritime economy, health care, aerospace and others. Russia called the ROK to participate in the development of projects in the RFE, and Russia received a promise to think about the Korean investments in the region, which may be implemented for specific projects. It seems that the Russian leadership is aware that in the foreseeable future South Korea will not become a main investor in Russia´s eastern provinces. South Korean investors are extremely cautious to invest in the Russian market as demonstrated by the total volume South Korean investments in the Russian economy which amounted of just over $2.3 billion in 2015.

Russia's approach to the Korean peninsula remain strongly influenced by its self-conceptualisation as a great power: Russia seeks to remain global by acting regionally. Therefore, it tries to build links with both countries, and to improve relations with South Korea in particular, rather than bilateral relations with North Korea, as was previously the case.

To reinforce Russia's identity as an Asian power, the country necessitates different partners in Northeast Asia and not only China. Russian scholars frequently call the Russian leadership to diversify Russia's relations in Northeast Asia and to avoid overdependence on China. Therefore, Russia has tried to develop relations with other states such as Japan and South Korea. It is in Russia's interests to have good relations with all players in the region to maintain a balance. Accordingly, Russia developed a new model for the development of the RFE, based on the development of exports oriented. One of the main tasks is to promote the participation of South Korea in development projects in the region, particularly the development of Territories of Rapid Development. Nonetheless, this model has not yet succeeded and despite attempts to diversify relations economic relations in Northeast Asia, Russia's focus is likely to remain mainly on the on China.

Russia aspires to be a key player in the region and does not want to be marginalized from Korean matters and therefore has proposed large-scale trilateral projects with North Korea and South Korea in order to increase the influence of the country the peninsula with Russia and Eurasia. It seems that the ROK has no intentions to participate in the foreseeable future in Russia's large-scale trilateral projects, however. Park Geun-hye has stated that trilateral cooperation between Russia, the ROK, and the DPRK could be a first step in solving the nuclear issue. Nevertheless, South Korea considers that trilateral cooperation with Russia and North Korea would mean making concessions to the DPRK. As Alexander Zhebin notes, South Korea's requirements for its participation in Russia's trilateral projects is that Russia made the DPRK to refuse many of its positions. This approach is: "We will invest and you put pressure on North Korea's regime" (Interview 4) According to Zhebin, South Korea's position is the following: "If we cooperate with North Korea, it would strengthen the regime economically and it would legitimise it. If the North begins working with another country, it will begin to receive money from transit fees and the regime will become stronger, so it does not work for the US and the ROK." (Interview 4) Rimma Tangalicheva argues that "These are utopian projects. Russian trilateral projects are deemed to fail as there are no real intentions of neither side to further cooperation." (Interview 18)

> We must bring together all our efforts, all our obligations and rights to support Russia's historically supreme right to be strong.
>
> *Petr Stolypin*

CHAPTER EIGHT
Conclusions

Russia's long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Asiatic Russia, and advance its integration into Northeast Asia constitutes not only a development project but a meta-project intended to reassert Russia's greatpowerness. This meta-project is not only an integrative or a developmental one; it is an identity project, destined to reinforce Russia's great power identity. The double-task project, to develop and integrate Asiatic Russia into NEA, is the central element defining and promoting Russia as an Asian power reinforcing the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia.

In this regard, the Russian think tank *Valdai International Discussion Club* presented an analytical report entitled *Toward the Great Ocean – 2* at the 11th Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum in 2014. As per the report:

> The development of Siberia, the Far East and the Arctic is not even a mega-project. It is a meta-project. From the symbolic and philosophical point of view, the development of our eastern territories is a key step toward fulfilling Russia's historic mission as a bridge between Europe and Asia. (Valdai, 2014: 58)

This means that, through Siberia, Russia embraces a unique Eurasian identity in order to maintain its status as a great power. According to David Kerr, President Putin asserts:

> some version of the middle continent as a Russia-centered civilizational space that both separates and unifies East and West. Only in this way can Russia avoid the fate of being reduced to a regional power—a power that matters to its neighbors but not otherwise. (Kerr 2009: 2)

As Dmitri Trenin explains, Russia is a global power because of Asiatic Russia, and "without Siberia, Russia would no longer be Russia, but Moscovy." (Trenin 2012: 88)

This thesis attempted to connect three aspects—national identity, geographical settings, and external strategy. This research tried to locate Asiatic Russia historically and

geopolitically in Northeast Asia by looking at the way these three aspects have interacted across the changes in Russian statehood.

8.1. Summary

Russian national identity is highly complex; therefore, it is historically changeable, as Russia straddles the West and Asia, rather than being clearly located in Europe or in Asia. Russia's identity is made of various components, some of which are internally driven and some externally driven. In particular, its national identity has been framed around two main issues: the idea of Europe as the main 'Other', and the relation between its population and the state. (Laruelle, 2014) This thesis argued that one of the most important long-term factors influencing identity was its expansion into Northern Asia with the conquest of Siberia. The expansion of Russia to the Pacific coast transformed the country, from a landlocked eastern European state into an immense, multi-ethnic, and bi-continental empire. This great expansion fed into the Russian national idea, and reinforced the necessity to be a great power from the era of Peter the Great onwards. The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were both attempts to overcome this identity issue.

National identity and foreign policy are usually linked when discussing Russia's international affairs. Historically, the European vector of Russia's foreign policy has always been the strongest; the Asian vector, however, has always been present and at various points could be viewed as exerting some influence on the Russian self-perception. Russia's conceptualisation of Siberia, and particularly, its role in shaping its foreign policy in Asia, has always been multifaceted. Therefore, the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia often pointed in different directions – territorial expansion, isolation, or integration – at different times.

Russia self-conception as a great power between the West and Asia is a key element that defines its status and position in the world. This thesis argued that the majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Similarly, the Russian leadership and most of its citizens believe that Russia deserves the 'great power status' by virtue of its history, culture, resources, territory, and its geopolitical location as the central power of Eurasia. Hence, the status of great power is

'natural' for Russia and, therefore, should be treated as such by the other powers. This thesis claimed that Russia's self-perception of being a great power – greatpowerness – plays a central and defining role in Russia's foreign policy, and critically shapes Russia's understanding of its relations with other countries and regions.

Having said that, this thesis pursued a research study focusing on these problems: Russia's insistence on its great power status and the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia as a key demand of national identity. The research tried to explain not only how Russian foreign policy reflects this, but also how Asiatic Russia remains a central element in the defining and promoting of this national identity and its quest for a great power status. The thesis aimed to examine how the aforementioned ideas relate to the apparent necessity of Russia to develop Asiatic Russia and integrate it into Northeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region, pointing out to the dilemmas between cooperation and security issues. As pointed out, the function and perception of Asiatic Russia has never been exclusively internal or external, but has always arisen out of the interaction of the two. Therefore, this thesis not only studied the changes in Asiatic Russia in the post-Soviet period; but also the new external conditions in Northeast Asia.

Dostoyevsky claimed in 1881, that Russians did not possess a clear conception of their mission in Asia, and he urged his country to both find a place for Siberia and Asia as well as understand the mission of Russia in Asia. His claim in the current context has substance. The external conditions in Northeast Asia have dramatically changed in the last decades; however, as noted by Marlene Laruelle: "For the first time in the history of modern Russia, Asia is no longer a barbarous and backwards place toward which Russia turns in order to take the European Enlightenment to it." According to Laruelle, "China's growing power but also South Korea's lesser rise, changes the balance insofar as it makes Asia look like a potential model of development for Russia. The Asia paradigm in Russia's national identity framework has, therefore, been deeply modified" (Laruelle, 2014).

The ongoing relocation of the world's affairs towards the Asia-Pacific region brings Asiatic Russia and, therefore, Russia, closer to this new centre of gravity in international politics, security, and economics. In this sense, several Russian think-tanks close to the leadership, such as Valdai International Discussion Club, the Russian International Affairs Council, or the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), have urged

the government to implement a comprehensive strategy for the development and integration for Siberia. They assume that Russia's great power status depends, to a certain extent, on Russia's international position in the Asia-Pacific region: Russia is a Euro-Pacific country and it should act accordingly. As per the CSCAP "[…] the fate of the Russian state as a global player would be increasingly determined by the place of its Asian part in the new economical order." (CSCAP, 2010)

President Putin has declared that "the development of Siberia and the Far East is our national priority for the entire 21st century." (President of Russia, 2015) Frequent visits of the President and the Prime Minister to Siberia, the discourses, and the number of articles concerning this subject, illustrate this growing interest to turn to the east. Similarly, projects in the region have been, and are being developed by the government, such as the APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012, the creation of the Ministry for the Development of the Far East, the ongoing construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome, the construction of the gas pipeline 'Power of Siberia', the creation of the Territories for Rapid Development, as well as the construction of new pipelines, railways, highways, and industries.

Under Putin´s presidency, Russia has tried to develop a new Asia-Pacific strategy that seeks to rebalance its foreign policy and integrate this with its main task of developing Siberia and the Russian Far East, and promoting economic and other linkages with Northeast Asia. For instance, the organisation of the Second Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September 2016 aimed to emphasise Russia's 'pivot' to the Asia-Pacific region and reinvigorate the idea of Russia as a global power between the West and Asia. In this sense, bolstering the development of the RFE is said to be one of Russia's top priorities.

Nevertheless, there are also big challenges. The small and declining population, decaying infrastructure, low living standards in some regions, and poor climate investment, in addition to the huge distances and extreme weather, are factors that could seriously limit the economic growth of the region. Therefore,

> it remains unclear if Russia and its Far East are able to become the economic hub that will link two dynamic parts of the world — Asia and Europe, taking into account the numerous challenges that hamper the investment climate of the Far Eastern region. (Koshkin, 2016)

Russian and international scholars, members of the Russian elite, and potential investors, among others, frequently call the Russian leadership to take advantage of Siberia's geographic location, and of the RFE, in particular. In the words of Igor Makarov: "Russian Far East's geographic location opens many opportunities for establishing win-win collaboration with Northeast Asian countries." (Interview 5) Accordingly, the key element of such collaboration "should be not state-sponsored, should not be based on large-scale plans and infrastructure projects but to give more freedom to Chinese, Korean, and Japanese businesses in implementing their plans." (Interview 5) In the words of a European scholar participating in the EEF:

> Let comparative advantage run its course and create some linkages cross-border in East Asia rather than focusing on Russia on the whole. […] This has a better chance of both attracting Asian companies to Russia and attracting European countries looking at Russia's Far East as a springboard to the rest of Asia. (Koshkin, 2016)

He also said that Russia should not interfere in the RFE but let itself "find its own way regionally." However, it seems this is exactly what Russia does not want. According to Portyakov:

> If we did not interfere, that part of Russia (the RFE) could completely integrate with the Asia-Pacific region, but this is not our plan. We do not want that this part of Russia to fall under the cultural or the economic space of China. (Interview 2)

As argued throughout this thesis, Russia's plans for Siberia are closely connected to Russia's plans as a whole; this is in line Russia's great power ambitions. Indeed, Russia could let the RFE "find its own way regionally" and advance its integration into NEA's economic space. Following this path could bring potential benefits for the population and could bring to a halt the economic and demographic crisis in the region. Closer economic cooperation between the RFE and NEA could even attract people from within Russia to the region, as Stolypin's reforms did more a century ago. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate whether following this path would actually help to improve the living conditions in the region and to stop the population's exodus. Similarly, this research does not analyse the disparate centre-region priorities. From the Moscow perspective, however, following this path is unacceptable, as this would threaten Russia's full sovereignty over the region and would bring into question the country's great power status. As Dmitri Trenin notes, the centrepiece of Russia's foreign policy course has been – and remains – the winning of "full sovereignty" for Russia. (Trenin, 2015) This thesis argued that sovereignty is a key element

in Russia's foreign policy, and, in particular, the external relations of Siberia, as it is closely linked with Russia's great power ambitions.

Siberia symbolises Russia's opportunities and vulnerabilities, and epitomises the difficulty of controlling and developing a vast territory and integrating it into a broader region. By the same token, it embodies Russia's great power dilemmas between strategic security concerns and economic opportunities.

According to Russia's greatpowerness, Russia's priority is to secure its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Losing territorial control and *de facto* sovereignty over Siberia, and, particularly, the RFE and the Arctic, would put an end to Russia's great power ambitions. Thus, the regions' security issues are at the heart of Russian great power policies in NEA. The preoccupation in Russia is that further economic integration with NEA would weaken the ties of Russia's eastern provinces with European Russia and strengthen the influence of other countries (China, in particular), on Russia's east. Without China's rise, the issue of sovereignty might not be an issue at all. Russia's apparent dependence on China, forces the country to securitise the external relations of Asiatic Russia. Thus, the issue of whether China, Japan, or South Korea should be considered the main partners to develop Asiatic Russia, and the economic dependency of certain eastern federal entities on these countries, particularly on China, is viewed as a matter of national security.

For Russia, the importance of the partnership with China is essential to the security of the RFE, and central to the country's self-conceptualisation as a great power, as it legitimises to a certain extent Russia's claims to Asian power. Nevertheless, Russia's identity as an Asian power necessitate different partners in the Asia-Pacific region and not only China; it is in Russia's interests to have good relations with all players in the region to maintain a balance. Accordingly, the new model for the development of the RFE, based on the development of exports, oriented to the Asia-Pacific region, was launched by the government in 2013, in order to promote Japanese and South Korean participation in the region, particularly the development of Territories of Rapid Development. Nonetheless, this model has not yet succeeded.

Russia's regional growing dependence on China changes the regional balance, insofar as it makes China look like a potential menace to Russia's great power identity. Russia not only wants to remain a key partner to China, but to be an indispensable and

independent player on the key issues in Northeast Asia for reasons of its identity as a great power. By the same token, exclusive Chinese economic presence in the RFE could potentially jeopardise Russia's sovereignty over its eastern provinces. For Russia, it is of extreme importance that China does not have hegemonic access. In this sense, partnership with Japan and South Korea could actually help reinforce Russia's sovereignty over the region while, at the same time, protecting its own security interests in Northeast Asia and helping to boost its status in the region. The territorial dispute with Japan, and the North Korean issue, however, appear to be the main impediments in this endeavour. Thus, despite calls for diversification, the relationship with China remains central to Russia's Asia-Pacific policy, and decision-makers seem to agree on the need to keep China as a key partner. (Kuhrt, 2015)

This thesis argued that the internal and external geopolitics of Siberia are closely interconnected. As pointed out, the function and perception of Asiatic Russia has never been exclusively internal or external, but has always arisen out of the interaction of the two. Siberia's external affairs are closely interconnected to Russia's own internal affairs, and its place within the country. Russia attempts to not only advance Siberia's integration into Northeast Asia but to advance the integration of the region into the rest of the country. In this sense, it is a double-task meta-project.

As described in Chapter Three, the development of Siberia and its integration into Russia and NEA is not a new issue, but a four-centuries-old question. The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and now the Russian Federation, have all addressed this issue albeit in different forms. In 1582, the Cossack Yermak Timofeevich took Isker and subdued the khanate of Siberia on behalf of Tsar Ivan IV. This opened the possibility for the Russians to explore and conquer Siberia. The historic expedition of Yermak opened a path all the way to the east. Russia's expansion, initiated by Yermak, reached the Pacific coast in less than sixty years, and in 1647, sixty-one years after building the first Russian settlement in Asia (1586), the Russians founded the city of Okhotsk on the coast of what is today the Sea of Okhotsk at the Pacific Ocean. Russia rapidly expanded to the east and consolidated its empire; however, it could not really integrate it into the country afterwards.

Historically, as described in Chapter Three, Russia's centre has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The conquest,

settlement, and integration of the region with the rest of the country, has been done selectively, depending on the interests of European Russia and the country, as a whole. The centre developed a semi-colonial relationship with Siberia, which gradually became the raw material appendage of European Russia. In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries; however, Siberia continued to be instrumental. The development of Siberia has followed the military-strategic and economic requirements of the centre, giving absolute priority to the national requirements and interests considered by the ruling elite, while the regional priorities were constantly relegated and disregarded. Russia has pursued a strategy of regional development in the context of the development of the country as a whole. As argued, the region´s resources have not been used to solve regional problems or to improve the region's infrastructure, but to seal the loopholes of the Russian economy, thus, limiting the potential of the region. It seems that Siberia is still viewed by a section of the Russian elite as an outpost. Thus, basically, and so far, the semi-colonial approach continues. Therefore, Russia has a dual assignment: to integrate Asiatic Russia into the broader Asia-Pacific region, and to finally integrate it with the European part of Russia. Nathasha Kuhrt notes that there is a fear/risk, that if the process of integration fails, instead of a double integration (into Russia and Asia-Pacific), Russia's eastern provinces may face a future of double-periphery. (Kuhrt, 2012:480)

Additionally, the abovementioned double-project in the region depends, to a great extent, both on the state of political relations between Russia and the West, and particularly on the performance of the Russian economy in the long term.

Relations between Russia and the West in general, and between Russia and the United States in particular, do influence the relations between the NEA countries and Russia and, therefore, have a notable impact on regional cooperation. The negative impact of the crisis in Ukraine on the relations of Asiatic Russia with Japan and South Korea, corroborate this idea. Thus, the development of Asiatic Russia is not just a matter of developing an adequate model and changing regional policies.

> It is a matter of the overall scope of international relations between Russia and China, Korea, and Japan. It is not about the changing of the policy for the development of the RFE. There should be some stabilisation in the relations of Russia with them. (Interview 5)

In the words of Igor Makarov: "Is it possible [to improve relations with Japan and South Korea] without the stabilisation of Russia's relations with the West? I am not sure, maybe this is impossible." (Interview 5) To understand Russia's relations with the East, it is essential to first understand the relations of Russia with the West from a historical perspective.

The state of the Russian economy, in general, plays a central role in Russia's integration plans. Indeed, any plans to develop Asiatic Russia and to integrate it into Asia cannot succeed, if based only on the export of oil and gas. To change the current trade structure with NEA and the model of development, however, it is not a matter of changing the policies in the region or simply implementing a new model for development. In the words of Vladimir Portyakov:

> The question for Russia to position itself in the Asia region, in reality, 90 percent, depends on the state and faculties of the Russian economy. Political factors are important, but the most important thing for Russia is to offer them something valuable. For the time being, we only offer oil and gas and nothing more, maybe fish, some timber, but there is not anything else to offer. (Interview 2)

Energy is the main field for economic cooperation between Russia and NEA. The share of NEA countries has increased in Russia's exports of oil, not only to China, but to Japan and South Korea. One of the most prominent fields is the supply of gas and LNG from Russia to NEA. Today, the volume is minimal, but it is expected that the share of NEA countries will drastically increase. Nevertheless, it seems that for the Russian leadership, energy cooperation is seen more as a geopolitical tool aimed to increase its leverage in Northeast Asia than as the means to boost economic cooperation in the region.

Russia is interested in Asia for the potential to export natural resources, create new niches, find new markets, attract foreign investment, and strengthen political and social ties with their neighbours, all this with the aim of developing Siberia, raising the living standard, and reasserting its sovereignty over the region. For this, Russia has to develop an integral model of regional development. There are several internal socio-economic factors that hamper the implementation of this model. Russia is wary of becoming a raw material appendage of China, which hinders border cooperation. Russia's current economic policies, in general, tend to reinforce this dependency. Seemingly, Russia's great power policies have not successfully addressed the socio-economic and demographic problems. It seems

that a comprehensive strategy, linking great power ambitions and socio-economic development of the region, is yet to come.

As has been said, the development of Siberia is Russia's internal affair, but due to the region's geopolitical situation, Northeast Asian countries play a preeminent role in the region's development. Nevertheless, due to Siberia's internal geopolitics, the Russian leadership is very careful about the way that external relations of Asiatic Russia are conducted: a rapid liberalisation may result in the loss of sovereignty. However, Russia cannot perpetuate Siberia's status quo as it would accentuate the socio-economic and demographic problems. The new external conditions force the Russian government to pursue a double integration project, as isolation may perpetuate the backwardness of the region. The internal development and foreign affairs of Asiatic Russia are conducted by the Russian state under great power logic. In the words of Natasha Kuhrt:

> What appear at first glance as purely domestic issues, such as migration and demographics, environmental degradation, and energy resources, can all be securitised and linked back into Russia's self-conceptualisation as either a successful 'Great Power' on the path to modernisation or, conversely, as a declining resource base and 'raw materials appendage. (Kuhrt, 2012:472)

"*Velikoderzhavnost*" – greatpowerness – defines Russia's self-conceived status and position in the world. This 'greatpowerness' is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making. Similarly, *Asiatic Russia* is a prime component contributing to national identity, as Russia is conceived as a great power between Western and Asian countries. Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has established a long-term project to develop and improve the living conditions in Asiatic Russia and advance its integration into Northeast Asia. As Anne Clunan argues, Russia's national interests and foreign policy cannot be defined on the basis of conventional cost-benefit assessments. (Clunan, 2009) This is, ambitions as a great power in Northeast Asia are essential to understand present national identity and international matters in Northeast Asia.

8.2. Research Questions

8.2.1. Research Question 1

1. **How is Russian national identity constructed? What role does the idea of Russia being a great power play in Russia's national identity? How is this reflected in Russia's foreign policy construction?**

National identity is performatively constituted., there is no primordial identity whatsoever. National identity is a construct of the state created for the purpose of legitimating itself as distinct. A nation is not a homogeneous entity, however. Within a nation there are different groups and schools of thought which respond differently to international and local conditions and experiences and try to connect foreign policy and national identity. Each group has its own conception of national identity and the relationship of the nation with the international order. Within Russia, these groups have debated with intensity the place of Russia in the world by linking culture, history, and beliefs with current affairs in the international arena.

Russian schools of thought on international affairs are grounded on three major traditions: Westernism, Neo-Eurasianism, and Pragmatic Eurasianism. Each of these highlights different categories to explain the identity of Russia as a nation and consequently the type of foreign policy it should pursue. These traditions emerged after the demise of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, they are grounded on the history of Russia's relationship with Europe and on the old debate on Russian identity and Russia's place in the world. These traditions try to show Russia's foreign policy in accord with their view of Russia and the world and the way these traditions show a continuance with the schools of thought that have developed in Russia in the last two hundred years. Behind these schools it is possible to recognize the same old Westernizer/Slavophile dilemmas.

The political and economic elites in the 1990s did not take into account Russia's historical self-conception as a great power sense and therefore its national identity project ultimately failed. Indeed, identity issues became highly contested in Russia in the 1990's among different groups and the conflict was very intense' until one of the visions of the country became predominant. Under Putin, *pragmatist eurasianism* became dominant when

its self-images could hold historical validity and could be successfully applied under current conditions. Consequently, this dominant national identity determines Russia's national interests and the foreign policy it should pursue under Putin's administration. In this sense, the majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Russia's foreign policy under Putin's administration reflects the wide consensus that Russia's identity is that of global great power.

Russia as a great power is a central idea of national identity within both the elites and the population. The self-conceptualisation of being a great power has an important role in Russia's domestic policies and external relations. The Russian leadership not only struggles to confirm the country's great power status to its citizens but also strives to be recognized by the international community and the West as a great power. Russia has claimed great power status since the reign of Peter I onwards. Following the collapse of the USSR, Russia has continuously stated the necessity to be a great power.

"Velikoderzhavnost" or greatpowerness is a concept that Russians have used to define its status and position in the world and a way of linking Russia into a more universal global view. For the Russian leadership and most of its citizens Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, and territory. That is, the status of great power is 'natural' for Russia and therefore should be treated as equal by other powers.

In the 1990s the Russian elite developed the concept of *multipolarity*: an international system in which a handful of large states (great powers, poles) were the guardians of the global order based on a balance of power among them. Each center of power must have considerable military, economic, and political potential, as well as the will and the ability to regulate and influence world processes. Naturally, Russia regarded itself as one pole within this multipolar world. For Putin, Russia had developed the capabilities of a great power in order to secure its borders. In fact, being a great power is a prerequisite for the existence of Russia as a nation; Russia cannot but be a great power.

The concept of multipolarity was further developed under Putin's presidency. The government declared that multipolarity was the basis of the Russian approach to international politics. Russia believes it has the right to be at the table where important decisions are taken. By the same token, it is essential for Russia to have a manoeuvrable

foreign policy and the possibility of retaining the status of an independent strategic centre of power. For Russia, freedom of choice is an asset in the era of multipolarity. Russia sees itself as an independent player that is to be respected and has the right to be involved in those global matters which considers important for its own interests.

For the Russian leadership and leading scholars, the main elements of what makes a country a great power are, especially, hard power elements. In this sense, Russia would have most of the attributes which traditionally have characterised great powers: military strength, territory, leadership in space, and natural resources. But in terms of economy and population, Russia has little likelihood of fulfilling the criteria. Russia, however, has recently paid more attention to soft power forms such as culture, education, technology, science, and acting globally.

Russia's great power identity greatly differs from the understanding in the West of what is to be a great power, especially when it comes to soft power elements. Russia's understanding of soft power greatly differs from that of the West. Russia's soft power is often framed in geopolitical terms. In the West it is often questioned whether Russia is a great power or not. To Russians it seems unimaginable that Russia would not be a great power. As can be seen, between Russia and the West there are different notions of which are the necessary attributes to be considered a great power. As there is no agreement on the criteria an important element is great power identity. The self-assertion of being a great power follows the interests of the nation, and therefore the recognition of greatpowerness is also based on the country's interests and not on objective measures.

The Russian leadership and elites have underlined Russia's 'great' past to create a consensus in Russia's historical status as great power. There is appreciation of Soviet greatpowerness among most of the population and elites. In this sense, Putin's presidency attempts to restate this 'natural status' for Russia.

The majority of the Russian elites and leading scholars have converged on the idea that Russia has to be a great power. Similarly, the Russian leadership and most of its citizens believe that Russia deserves great power status by virtue of its history, culture, resources, territory and geopolitical location as the central power of Eurasia. This is, the status of great power is 'natural' for Russia and therefore should be treated as such by other

powers. Russia's greatpowerness is a central element of Russia's national identity and exerts huge influence in the country's foreign policy making.

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8.2.2. Research Question 2

2. **What has been the rationale behind Russia's conquest, colonization, and later development of Asiatic Russia (Siberia/Russian Far East/Arctic)? What is Siberia to Russia in the twenty-first century?**

It should be noted that Russia's eastward expansion is not the history of a territorial imperative through which the Russian state attempted at all times to incorporate regions beyond its border. The expansion to the Baltic Sea or to the south should not be compared to that in the east. Similarly, it is important to avoid generalisations across historical periods. The motivation for the initial penetration beyond the Urals was different to that for the Great Northern Expedition or for the annexation of the Amur and Ussuri regions in 1860.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the export of furs motivated and paid for the cost of the expansion into Siberia, and was the main reason behind the enlargement. Concurrently, the state tried to legitimise Siberia as part of the Russian Empire through economic, military, and legal methods. Thus, it was a complex process with two parallel and intertwined trends: the people's and the state's colonisation. (Ablazhei, 2010:230)

In the eighteenth century, security and economic reasons, as well as a lack of knowledge of Siberian and North Pacific geography, caused the government to support the exploration and settlement of Siberia. Under Peter the Great, the government sought new lands, routes and resources to strengthen the Russian Empire and Russian economic, political and military power reached Alaska, California and even Hawaii.

In the nineteenth century, Siberia still was a void in terms of population and power and a land of fur traders and exile. Thus, Russia intended to establish itself firmly in a territorial and political sense in northeast Asia. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Stolypin's reforms and the wave of new settlers were among the most important periods in both Russia's and Siberia's history. Nevertheless, Stolypin then urged a halt to expansion beyond the Russian frontiers and withdrawal to these frontiers.

Following the creation of the USSR, Siberia underwent rapid changes due to large-scale industrialisation. In the second half of twentieth century, the role of Asiatic Russia gradually increased due to its geopolitical location and the exploitation of natural resources. The Asian part of the Russia became a fortress, a new frontline that insulated itself. Intensive economic development of Siberia took place only during the past hundred years.

For four centuries, the Tsardom of Muscovy, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have extended eastward; this expansion has brought under their control a huge territory and plenty of natural resources, however, this expansion has also brought multiple security concerns to Russia and has met resistance from regional neighbours, mainly Japan and China. Historically, the main concern in the east was China, and only in the first half of the twentieth century did Japan become its main concern. In Soviet times, the Russian presence in Asia was unprecedented in its intensity, nevertheless, following the dissolution of the USSR, the Russian Federation suffered a severe crisis and began to look for a place for its territory in Asia. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the turning of the country to the west made Russia much less an Asian power.

Historically, Russia's leadership has approached Siberia from the perspective of its resource potential and as a military outpost. The colonisation and further integration of the region with the rest of the country was undertaken selectively, depending on the security-political and economic imperatives of Russia as a whole. European Russia has developed a semi-colonial relationship with Siberia which gradually became its raw material appendage. In Soviet times, Asiatic Russia played a more important role than in the previous centuries, however, Siberia continued to be instrumental. The development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times followed a rationale: the geostrategic principles had a higher priority than the commercial ones

Currently, the region defined as Asiatic Russia constitutes the historical, cultural, and geographical basis for Russia's status as a great power and its distinctiveness from the West. Under President Putin's administration, Russia has sought to define its national identity as *Eurasian* by connecting the ideas of greatpowerness, multicultural and bi-continental country, and economic integration.

One of the key elements used to sustain Russia's aspirations to be a great power is its Asiatic Russia. It is often argued by the Russian elites that Russia by virtue of its history

and geography, the country was, is, and will be a great power. As a result, Siberia is naturally seen as an asset. From the Russian perspective, Siberia was crucial in the rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower. Thus, it is in Siberia that the resources and the space that supports, in large part, Russia's claim to great power status, are located. Russia owes its status as a global power to Siberia, which makes Russia more than big eastern European country.

The ongoing shift of economic and political activities to the East has put Asiatic Russia in the spotlight, Siberia is no longer on the world's periphery but close to one of the centers of the new global order. Thus, for first time in history, Asiatic Russia may serve not as a buffer against invaders but a source of competitiveness.

Siberia symbolises Russia's opportunities and vulnerabilities. Siberia's vastness, richness, and vulnerabilities epitomises the difficulty of controlling territory and integrating it into a broader region. By the same token, it embodies Russia's great power dilemmas between strategic security concerns and economic opportunities, between international cooperation and national control, and promoting private investments while maintaining control over natural strategic assets. Russia strives to modernise its economic structure, to develop the resources of Siberia, and to keep intact the country's integrity

The economic liberalisation in the 1990's had a negative impact on the region: subsidies from the government were drastically reduced and most of the incentives to live in the region were cut. This drastic reduction in subsidies and economics resulted in a significant deterioration of living standards. Similarly, population considerably declined and due to the scarce transportation infrastructure transport costs significantly rose. Under the market economy, some regions became much more profitable than others. Many enterprises, particularly in the North, became unprofitable due to elevated production costs. This resulted in the growth of income disparities among Siberia's regions and between Siberia and the rest of the country.

The analysis of demographic trends in the last 20 years reveals different patterns of growth and decline thorough Siberia as well as the areas with more acute problems. Although a gradual tendency of population decline is registered in practically all federal entities, the majority register intra-regional migration toward the regional centres, whereas the population of industrial cities has declined, although this decline has considerably

slowed in recent years. It could be argued that these regions have integrated more successfully into Russia's, and in some cases into NEA's, economies. On the other hand, there are cases, especially in the north and the RFE where both administrative centres and other cities register a drastic population decline and therefore need immediate support to stop the degradation of social and economic life.

Russia is a key Arctic player. It is not only the largest circumpolar state and possesses the longest Arctic shore line, but it is also the nation that apparently has the highest ambitions in the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Arctic apparently lost its importance for Russia; the policies of the country to the north focused on measures only to respond to the economic and social crisis originating from the demise of the USSR. Indeed, the Arctic was not a priority until the 2000s when it gradually regained its strategic importance for Russia.

Russia is gradually turning to the north through its policies and strategies. The government refers to the Arctic as an area of strategic national interest and constantly emphasises the importance of the region. Russia's interests in the Arctic are: economic, legal, environmental, and military-strategic.

The Russian Arctic nowadays produces about 20 percent of the country's gross domestic product and approximately 22 percent of the total Russian exports. Many deposits in the Barents Sea are already being exploited, while many fields and other projects for exploration in both the Barents and Kara Seas are being developed, as well as smaller prospects in the Laptev and East Siberian seas. The Yamal LNG project is one of the biggest LNG undertakings in world. Located in the Yamal Peninsula under extreme cold conditions, Yamal LNG is currently the main Russian project in the region. Another important project is the exploitation of the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea; it is one of the largest gas fields in the world.

Russia has paid special attention to the development of the Northern Sea Route. Russia envisages the NSR as a future international transport artery. Thus, the modernisation of the Northern Sea Route has become strategically important. Travelling along the NSR poses several challenges for Russia as to make it commercially viable Russia needs to upgrade, if not rebuild, the decaying infrastructure along the route. By the same token, high

operation costs and the unpredictability of the Arctic weather seriously limit the viability of using the route.

Although the increasing accessibility of the Arctic has brought most attention to the economic potential, it means serious concerns for Russia as it opens its vast coastline and territorial waters. In recent years Russia has substantially increased its military activity in the Arctic in order to improve its military capacity on an operational level. By the same token, Russia seeks to secure the region legally due to the several national claims on maritime borders and rights on the Arctic between circumpolar states.

Although the increasing accessibility of the Arctic has brought most attention to the economic potential, it means serious concerns for Russia as it opens its vast coastline and territorial waters. Russian perceptions of the Arctic are largely based on security considerations. It should be noted that most of Russia's civilian and nuclear facilities are located in the Arctic.

8.2.3. Research Question 3

3. What is the state of the overall relations between Russia and Northeast Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea)?

Historically, the western vector of Russia's foreign policy has been the most important in terms of great power status. Nevertheless, the Asian vector has gain considerable strength since Putin came to power in 2000.

For a better understanding of the case-study chapters, Chapter Three described how the Russians first met with the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. When Russia expanded into the North Pacific it became aware of the existence and location of these "mighty civilizations". Russia first officially met with China in 1689, it is underlined the fact that Russia was the first country with which China established diplomatic relations. In the case of Japan and Korea, Russians had only sporadic contacts; Russia could only establish communication with Japan and Korea in the second half of the nineteenth century. Russia established official relations with Japan in 1855 and with Korea in 1884. Chapter Three explains how Russia's expansion to the east met with resistance from regional neighbours. Historically, Russia´s main security concern for its eastern provinces was China, only from

1860 to 1945 did Japan become its main concern. In Soviet times, the Russian presence in Asia was unprecedented in its intensity and its border with China became a fortress, a new frontline that insulated itself. Nevertheless, following the dissolution of the USSR, Russia opened its borders to its neighbours and attempted to formulate beneficial relations with China, Japan, and South Korea.

This work has emphasised the noteworthy development in relations between Russia and China, Japan, and South Korea in the last 20 years. Sergei Sevastyanov notes that "it is the first time in the history of Russia that it has good relations with all its northeast Asian neighbours, China, Japan, North Korea and South Korea." (Interview 14)

The return to power of Putin in 2012 coincided with the accession to power of President Xi in China, Prime Minister Abe in Japan, and President Park in the Republic of Korea. As we observed in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, President Putin held summit meetings in 2013 with his counterparts from China, Japan, and South Korea. The summit meetings, the first between the leaders, held great importance and set the grounds for the development and improvement of the bilateral ties in the mid-term. Similarly, Putin has developed good personal relations with all of them of the leaders, particularly with Xi and Abe.

For Russia, China is the main economic partner, its total trade in 2014 amounted $95.3 billion, Japan ranked fifth among Russia's trade partners ($34.2 billion), and South Korea ranked ninth ($25.8 billion). In 2014, Russia ranked ninth among China's trade partners, ninth among South Korea's, and thirteenth among Japan's trade partners. China, Japan, and South Korea are the three most important trade partners of Russia outside of Europe. However, economic relations remain low compared to their potential.

The structure of the bilateral ties reflects the role of the countries in the world economy. Russia mainly imports machinery and equipment from China, transport machinery from Japan, and machinery equipment and motor vehicles from South Korea. Russia's main exports to China, South Korea, and Japan are fuel, mineral, oil, gas, and oil products. Of the total exports to China, Japan, and the ROK in 2012, fuel, mineral, oil, gas, and oil products accounted for 69%, 76%, and 79% of the total, respectively.

US pressure on China and Russia has pushed the two countries closer, however, the situation is far more complex than this. Both countries benefit from this partnership and in

the mid-term it is likely to improve, as it is advantageous for both. Russia and China see multipolarity as the foundation of the global system. It is highly unlikely that they will form any kind of alliance in the short-term, however, as they believe that Cold War style alliances are something from the past. Both countries want to remain independent and do not want to openly confront the West, particularly China. In the long term the future of the relationship is much more uncertain, and managing a normal relationship is a challenge for both powers. Relations are said to be the best in history not because the relationship is the closest, but because it is a normal and real one. For both sides, it seems dangerous to be either too close or too far. It could be argued that a normal and cooperative relationship is in the best interests of both, but there is much room for improvement.

Relations between Japan and Russia have fluctuated between increasing closeness and stagnation The absence of a peace treaty, an unsolved territorial dispute, and the US-Japan military alliance has prevented both countries from upgrading the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. Still, economic ties have developed since the 1960s, particularly in Siberia and the RFE, and have shown a sharp increase in the last decade. Economic cooperation remains the main sphere for partnership between Russia and Japan, although improvements in political relations occur at a slower pace. In 2012 a new phase of Japan-Russia relations commenced and the leaders of both countries expressed their intention to deepen Russo-Japanese strategic ties, and their determination to resolve the decades-long issues once and for all. The current crisis between Russia and the West has, however, disrupted this project.

The national interests of Japan and Russia are not in direct conflict with each other, and converge to a certain extent. It is in the interests of both countries to improve the bilateral relationship. Despite the fact that no progress has been made over the territorial issue in 70 years, cooperation in different fields has improved. Both countries are of strategic value to each other and have expressed their intention to strengthen bilateral ties. Such cooperation could be the catalyst for a possible resolution of the dispute, but even if it is not solved bilateral relations could make progress, and cooperation in Siberia and the RFE could be enhanced. The territorial dispute is an issue, but it is not the most relevant one, and bilateral ties should be not centred on it. Both countries will continue to develop ties with each other, particularly in the field of energy, irrespective of the situation of the

Northern Territories. Russia is developing and deepening relations with China, and Japan is doing so with the US. The US-Japan-Russia triangle plays an important role, and it seems the more Japan sides with the US, the more Russia will move closer to China.

Russia-South Korea bilateral relations have shown noteworthy furtherance since their normalisation in 1990. Both countries consider each other crucial and valuable strategically in pursuing their national interests. Many achievements have been made in the fields of security, politics, economics, and people-to-people. Arguably, the *Eurasia Initiative* proposed by South Korea's President Park Geun-hye, calling for energy and logistics infrastructure connecting South Korea and Eurasia coincides with Russia's long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Siberia and the Russian Far East, and its integration into Northeast Asia.

Russia's goals in the peninsula are to: establish peaceful international environment for national development, a peaceful solution of the North Korean issue, increase the country's influence in the region, and improve economic ties to develop the RFE. South Korea is also strategically important for Russia, particularly in the development of Siberia and the RFE, and to balance its foreign policy in NEA, thus avoiding overreliance on China and bringing capital and technology that would greatly contribute to the development of the region.

Russia and the ROK have repeatedly underlined their interest in developing and consolidating a strategic cooperative partnership, but it seems that the present development of the bilateral relation does not always correspond with the high expectations set by both countries. The bilateral relations must cope with several challenges, the North Korean problem being the main issue that hinders the development of bilateral ties. As a result, the actuality of the partnership has been put into question.

In spite of different approaches to some international issues, such as North Korea's problem, and the ROK's alliance with the United States, there are no serious contentious issues that could thwart the development of bilateral ties. South Korea has included the provision of strategic partnership in joint documents only with China and the US.

8.2.4. Research Question 4

4. **What is the contrast between Russia's regional political-security perspectives on the one hand and economic integration perspectives on the other? What role does Russia's great power identity play in Russia's relations with Northeast Asian countries? What are the perspectives for cooperation in the Arctic?**

Russia's regional strategies are mostly aimed to gain great power recognition. For Russia's ambitions as a great power, material capabilities are of great importance. Nevertheless, the significance of material capabilities is the product of a process of social construction, and the result of that social construction is relevant as well. (Leichtova, 2014:34) In this case, Russia's greatpowerness. As argued, Russia's interests and security priorities are not only linked to a material level but to ideas as well related to its great power identity and the necessity for Russia to be recognised as Asian power.

The main field for Russia-NEA cooperation in Siberia and the Russian Far East is energy. The aspirations of China, Japan, and South Korea to diversify and secure their energy sources are matched by Russia's national strategy to diversify its energy exports. For NEA countries it is imperative to improve energy security, and for Russia to exploit new markets in East Asia. Limited energy resources in the region threaten sustained economic development.

For Russia, the importance of the partnership with China is essential to the security of the RFE and central to the country's self-conceptualisation as a great power as it legitimates to a certain extent Russia's claims to Asian power. Nevertheless, Russia's identity as an Asian power necessitate different partners in the Asia-Pacific region and not only China. Despite Russia's deiversification attepmts, however, the relationship with China remains central to Russia's Asia-Pacific policy and the Russian elites understand the fact that China will remain the key partner, at least in the foreseeable future. Therefore, to assert its identity as Asia power Russia requires to develop relations with other states, Japan and South Korea in particular. Exclusive Chinese economic presence in the RFE could eventually threaten Russia's sovereignty over its eastern provinces. This goes against Russia's strategy to become an Asian power and therefore to be recognized as a global great power. For Russia it seems of extreme importance for the Russian elites that China

does not have hegemonic access. Japan and South Korea could actually reinforce Russian sovereignty over the region.

Interactions and cooperation between Asiatic Russia and China reflect the state of the Russia-China Strategic Partnership, and at the same time influence it to a certain extent. For Russia's great power ambitions, China appears to present both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, China in part legitimates Russia's claim to Asian power status. On the other hand, dangerous dependence on China specially after the crisis in Ukraine brings the region's security issues to the forefront. The more unequal the relationship grows in terms of the balance of power, the more fearful Russia will be of China's presence in its eastern provinces. In contrast, the more equal the relationship becomes, the more confident Russia will be in the relationship of its Asian region with China.

Chinese companies are gradually investing more in the RFE. Nevertheless, due to lack of competition, they are in a stronger position vis-à-vis Japanese and South Korean businesses. Japanese businesses could play an important role; they could become a serious alternative for Chinese investments. Nevertheless, aside from Sakhalin projects, there appear to be no joint large-scale Russo-Japanese projects planned for the near future. This contradicts Russia's new model for the development of the RFE.

Stable and good relations between Russia and Japan can develop parallel to negotiations over the disputed islands. Despite the fact that no progress has been made over the territorial issue in 70 years, cooperation in different fields has improved. Both countries are of strategic value to each other and have expressed their intention to strengthen bilateral ties. Such cooperation could be the catalyst for a possible resolution of the dispute, but even if it is not solved bilateral relations could make progress, and cooperation in Siberia and the RFE could be enhanced. Japan's technologies and investment remain important for implementing development programmes in Siberia and the RFE. Russia's regional growing dependence on China changes the regional balance insofar as it makes China look like a potential menace to Russia's great power identity. Russia not only wants to remain a key partner to China but to be an indispensable and independent player on the key issues in Northeast Asia for reasons of its identity as a great power. In this sense, a partnership with Japan could actually reinforce Russian sovereignty over the region while at the same time

protecting its own security interests in Northeast Asia and increase its status in the region. The territorial dispute, however, appears to be a main impediment in this endeavour. Sovereignty and territorial integrity are central notions to the Russian state. Sovereignty is a key element in Russia's foreign policy, and in particular the external relations of Siberia, as it is closely linked with Russia's great power ambitions. Therefore, Russia maintains its traditional position on relations with Japan regarding the territorial dispute.

The Republic of Korea is crucial in Russia´s plan: it can provide markets for Siberia's natural resources and it can greatly contribute to the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. For South Korea, Russia is becoming strategically important for security reasons, and it is interested in participating in the development of Russia's East. Russia has proposed large-scale trilateral projects with North Korea and South Korea. These projects could eventually link the peninsula with Russia and Eurasia. South Korea has been effectively cut off from the mainland for the last seventy years and has practically become an island. Cooperation with Russia could bridge the island to the mainland and bring both societies closer. There are external and internal factors that hinder further cooperation, however: the North Korean problem, South Korean alliance with the US, and the still low level of people-to-people relations. As part of this trust-building process, since the 2000s Russia has proposed a new paradigm: large-scale Russia-North Korea-South Korea projects such as building a gas pipeline from Russia to South Korea via North Korea, and reconstructing and linking the Trans-Korean railway to the Trans-Siberian railway, thus facilitating the transit of cargo between South Korea and Russia via the DPRK.

Concerning the Arctic, China, Japan, and the ROK joined the Arctic Council in 2013 as permanent observers. Of all of them, South Korea is the only country that has formulated an official strategy for the Arctic. The political interests of the three countries differ little from one another: international cooperation, sustainable development, and environmental protection.

China sees the Arctic as an environmental zone and an area for economic opportunities. China is looking to influence the way in which the region is governed as it considers it as the world's common heritage. The Chinese government is still in the early stages of developing an official strategy for the region. In order to avoid creating concerns, it constantly asserts that China recognises the rights of Arctic states over the region. For

Russia, cooperation with China is now focused on the development of energy resources, especially after China decided to participate in the Yamal LNG project and agreed to joint resource-exploration with Russia in the Barents and Pechora seas.

Of the NEA countries, Japan is the one with the most experience in the Arctic as it has conducted scientific research in the region since the 1970s. Politically, however, it is more passive than China and South Korea. For Japan, the main reason for its involvement in the region is to protect and understand the Arctic environment and, therefore, its priority in the region is scientific research. Japan is interested in the use of the NSR as it is the closest to it; from NEA countries it is the one that has the most interest in the route. In fact, it has carried out feasibility studies for using it. For Russia, cooperation with Japan is important as it is a highly technologically advanced country with a high level of scientific knowledge. Similarly, partnership could be important for the modernisation of infrastructure along the NSR. For the time being, the main field for bilateral cooperation in the region is research, particularly after the formation of the Joint Group of Japan of Russia on Arctic Research. Japan remains skeptical regarding the potential economic benefits and its business community does not see significant economic opportunities at the moment.

In 2013, the government of South Korea articulated an official strategy for the Arctic containing four strategic goals: scientific, economic, political, and legal. One of the main interests of the country in the Arctic is the impact of global climate change in the region. The country has shown concerns for the impact that this change can have on Northeast Asia's climate. Shipping and shipbuilding comprises the main interests of South Korea in the Arctic as theuse of the NSR and the development of energy resources in the Arctic could increase the demand for icebreakers, ice-class vessels, tankers, and particularly LNG tankers. Similarly, South Korea is interested in cooperation in the infrastructure along Russia's Arctic coast to improve port infrastructure. We believe that for the time being, the ROK is the most prominent NEA partner for Russia in the Arctic, particularly in shipbuilding and offshore infrastructure.

China, Japan, and South Korea, all they seek to actively participate in the Arctic Council to enhance its international profile. Similarly, they believe global climate change concerns all, and the Arctic is a kind of barometer of climate change. The three countries think that actions in the region have global effects and, therefore, non-Arctic states have the

right to participate in discussions and decision-making. They consider the region to be a common heritage.

This thesis argued that all of these countries are more interested in the effects of climate change than in the long-term economic benefits of the region as the melting polar ice can have a negative impact on the countries' environment. Therefore, China, Japan, and South Korea focus on research activities in the region. Indeed, all countries have research stations on Svalbard Island. Regarding research activities, Japan is the country that has the greatest expertise.

China, Japan, and South Korea are interested in the development of the NSR as they are highly dependent on international shipping for exports and imports, particularly Japan and South Korea. For all of them, the NSR could become an alternative maritime route for the import of hydrocarbons to that of the Middle East and for commodity exports to Europe. The NSR is not only a shorter and safer alternative route for trade with Europe, but it could become a new route for energy supply. All of them are concerned about the overdependence on oil and gas from the Middle East and the use of the NSR would diversify their energy supplies. There is great skepticism, however, regarding the short- and mid-term economic benefits, particularly due to the weather's unpredictability in the region, the lack of infrastructure, and the harsh weather conditions that severely hinder resource-extraction.

Russia is apparently one of the most promising Arctic partners for NEA countries as it is the closest to them and possesses not only abundant natural resources but the NSR passes along its Arctic coast. One of the main potential points of contention of Russia with China, Japan, and South Korea is the possibility that Russia could impose strict regulations, high ice-breaking fees and particularly high fees for using the NSR as Russia consider it to be part of its territorial waters.

Opportunities are huge in the region and, in principle, it is very interesting for all of them, but not in the short-term. In general terms, it seems that international cooperation in the Arctic, and Russia-NEA cooperation in particular, is a very long-term projects that has not yet materialised. According to Vladimir Portyakov:

> Nothing will be there [in the Arctic] in the near future, there are only talks, especially after sanctions there is no technology. Moreover, the Russian position in the region is very tough, there will not be economic cooperation, no Northern Sea

> Route, for a long time there will be nothing. I do not see any economic prospects in the near future, all the infrastructure that existed in Soviet times along the Northern Sea Route, Diksi, Igarka, Tiksi, all is destroyed. There is nothing there. (Interview 2)

8.3. Final Conclusions

In his address to the recently elected 7th State Duma, President Putin asked the new parliament to keep the country in a position of influence. Putin recalled Petr Stolypin's address to the Duma more than a century ago: "We must bring together all our efforts, all our obligations and rights to support Russia's historically supreme right to be strong." (President of Russia, 2016) He said that Russia, as "any nation and any country, have exactly the same right, to be strong." Putin emphasised that Russia's strength is "within us, within our people, our traditions and culture, our economy, our huge territory and natural resources. It is in our defence power, of course. However, most importantly, our strength is in the unity of our people." Putin ended his address by underlining the fact that Russia's "strength" is essential for "preserving our statehood, independence and existence as a shared home for all the peoples living here." (President of Russia, 2016)

The Russian leadership has established a narrative on Russia as a global power in a multipolar world. Ergo, Russia has to be strong to be Russia. In fact, under this narrative being a great power is the condition of possibility for the existence of Russia as a nation; Russia cannot but be a great power. This narrative was established in the 1990s as an attempt to regain its great power status by counterbalancing the US unipolar order established after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian elite thus developed the concept of multipolarity. Naturally, Russia regards itself as one of the great powers within this multipolar world. As Margot Light observes: "The sanctification of Russia's great power status and the declared preference for a multipolar world order based on sovereignty and non-interference in states' internal affairs has been a constant." (Light 2015:23)

Russia's insistence on its great power status and the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia is a key demand of national identity. For Russia, it is essential to have a manoeuvrable foreign policy and the possibility of retaining the status of an

independent strategic centre of power, thus avoiding entering the zone of attraction of some other strong centre.

Russia has historically discussed its place as a great power between the East and the West. Russia is an enormous country that is culturally European, but with most of its territory in Asia. The question is not whether Russia is European or Asian. Culturally it is European, politically and economically it is Eurasian. Lukyanov (2015), observes that, historically, Russia has loved to play politically with the concepts of the East and the West "to try out the different roles it can play between them". Russia, however, was an "integral part of European politics" up until the Second World War, with the East playing a secondary role. During the Cold War, Russia embodied the East despite the fact that the East remained on the side-lines of world politics. Nowadays:

> [Russia] refuses to become part of the West, and yet it cannot embody the new East because Moscow has only a limited ability to dictate the regional agenda. What's more, the cultural composition of the East is now more clearly delineated than before: it centers on China and its culture, which is very different from Russia's. Russia experiences both opportunities and dangers with its position between East and West. (Lukyanov, 2015)

Russia is geographically very much part of Asia, but compared to Europe, Russia's ties with Asian countries are less developed. Russia is considered an economically, politically, and culturally, distant neighbour. Russia has not become an Asian power yet, and it maintains a low profile in the region. Russian scholars understand that Asian states "often do not regard Russia as an Asia-Pacific country, because its demography, economy and politics largely follow European patterns." (CSCAP, 2010: 2; Valdai, 2014: 9) The mere existence of Asiatic Russia is not sufficient basis for Russia being recognised as an Asian power.

Russia's 'pivot' to Asia initiated as a long-term rebalancing project under Putin's administration, aimed mostly to maintain its global power identity by preserving Russia's freedom of manoeuvrability and independence in world affairs. Nevertheless, this pivot remains mostly unsubstantiated in terms of foreign policy, and is not as clear as sometimes Russia's rhetoric suggests.

President Putin, in November 2016, signed an Executive Order approving the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. The first part of the document emphasises the notion that the international order is going through a period of rapid

changes, aimed at multipolar international system formation. Within the document, the post-Soviet region (CIS) is qualified as the priority area. Special attention has been given to the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union. At the same time, not much attention has been paid to Russia's eastern partners. The Asia-Pacific region should have been given more priority. The paragraphs on the Asia-Pacific region were not indicative of considerable changes, in comparison to the previous foreign policy concept signed in 2013. As per this document:

> Strengthening Russia's presence in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is becoming increasingly important since Russia is an integral part of this fastest-developing geopolitical zone, toward which the center of world economy and politics is gradually shifting. Russia is interested in participating actively in APR integration processes, using the possibilities offered by the APR to implement programs meant to boost Siberian and Far Eastern economy, creating a transparent and equitable security architecture in the APR and cooperation on a collective basis. (MID Russia, 2013)

Russia is trying to integrate itself into the Asia-Pacific region through the intensive economic and social development of Siberia and its Far East. NEA countries may provide markets for Siberia's natural resources, and also help Siberia's development. It is where Russia is more geopolitically vulnerable, and has not yet successfully responded to these circumstances. As Wishnick notes, the 2013 foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation embodies the contradiction between a privileged relationship with China, based on their shared positions on key global issues, and the expansion of Russia's multilateral and bilateral ties seen as necessary to strengthen the Russian presence in the Asia-Pacific region and contribute to regional conflict resolution. (Wishnick, 2016:12)

The conflict in the Ukraine from 2014 onwards, and the merger of Crimea with Russia, have pushed Russia in direct confrontation with the West. At the same time, this has created a large consensus among the elites and the population.: the "post Crimea consensus." (Morozov, 2015) According to this, the population accept economic hardships in return for the country's great power status. As noted by Trenin: "No recent issue has brought Russia's domestic and foreign policies as intimately together as Crimea and Ukraine." (Trenin 2015:42) This can be seen in the result of the Duma elections where the ruling party United Russia obtained around 75 percent of the seats on the Duma. Similarly, the "post-Crimea" consensus boosted President's Putin popularity.

This crisis pushed Putin's government into seemingly anti-Western policies which are seemingly endorsed by the majority of the population. Similarly, Putin has distanced Russia of the West and of Europe, as they are seen, both, as a source of external political influence and as a threat to the country's interests. In the course of this investigation, the state of the mood has changed very significantly after the crisis between Russia and the West, which apparently has accelerated Russia's turning to Asia. It seems, however, that the crisis in Ukraine has not accelerated Russia's turn to Asia, but to China. After Putin returned to power, the Russian government actively developed ties, not only with China, but with Japan and South Korea. Nonetheless, relations with Japan and South Korea cooled after the crisis, whereas Russia-China ties strengthened. In this sense, Russia has entered in a phase, the contours of which are unclear, and with unknown consequences. The crisis has pushed Russia into a sort of insulation, or into China's growing dependence. Both scenarios have their own opportunities and risks.

Vladimir Portyakov considers that the crisis in Ukraine did stimulate the Russian leadership to move closer to Asia; however, he emphasises that "it is not a re-orientation, it is a way to insure itself. A re-orientation to Asia would not work; it would be a long, difficult, and uncertain path" (Interview 2). In this regard, in his annual address to the Federal Assembly in December 2016, President Putin said:

> Let me reiterate that Russia is proactive in its Eastern policy not because of any momentary considerations we may have, not because of the cooling in relations with the United States or the European Union, but for the reason that it serves Russia's long-term interests and is consistent with the global development trends (MID Russia, 2016)

Russia's century project is the development of Siberia, the RFE, and the Arctic. For this endeavour, Russia needs both Europe and Asia. The current crisis between Russia and the West create both, opportunities and challenges, for Russia. Russia has the opportunity to strengthen ties, not only with China, but with Japan and South Korea. These countries have constantly expressed their interest in active cooperation with Russia in the region. Russia, however, has offered little more than oil and gas. By the same token, regional economic cooperation remains minimal. Ichiro Iwasaki notes the fact that to invest in the RFE "investors have first to talk to Moscow and only then to their partners in the RFE." (Interview 8) Russia must address the needs of Northeast Asian countries whilst considering its own interests. Russia has now the opportunity to find a balance between the

East and the West and to find a beneficial model of cooperation with China, Japan, and South Korea. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the solution to the Asiatic Russia problem cannot be solved only by internationalising its development. Multinational cooperation is not a panacea. To advance its double integration project, Russia should not only further develop ties with NEA countries, but establish stronger ties with European Russia and find a comprehensive model for development.

The development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times followed a rationale: the geostrategic principles had a higher priority than the commercial ones. Now, what is the rationale for developing Siberia? Are geostrategic principles still more important than commercial principles? What is the role of the state? What is the model for the development of Asiatic Russia? Rather than being part of a comprehensive strategy, however, there are isolated efforts to improve the situation. For instance, the organisation of the APEC summit in Vladivostok in 2012 and the development of infrastructure in the city prior to its hosting only created an enclave for development in the RFE. As a Vladivostok scholar notes, many residents of the city complain that some of the ventures were to costly and not all-benefitial such as the Russky bridge connecting Russky Island and FEFU to the city. (Interview 16) The construction of the bridge and the refurbishment of Vladivostok seem to be projects more designed for matters of Russia's international prestige in Asia than for catalysing socio-economic development. Indeed, Western scholars frequently point out the fact that for the Russian leadership it seems more important its great power strategies than socio-economic plans to improve living conditions in the country. In this sense, Iver Neumann argues that "Russia puts no attention to social and economic reforms but carries out great power policies in Ukraine." (Neumann, 2014)

As argued, it seems there is no rationale, no model, no paradigm for Siberia's development. Siberia is still semi-peripheral for Russia and for Asia; it still finds itself in a double-periphery location. For any integration plan to succed, special measures should be taken to improve rapidly and constantly the living standards. By the same token, the development of the region cannot be only based in the export of hydrocarbons and it should be taken only as a key asset that can finance projects of development. Nevertheless, it depends to a large extent on the ability of the country as a whole to diversify its economy in order to reduce its dependency on the energy sector. Under the prevailing circumstances, it

is not clear how Russia could move from resource-extracting industry only, primarily oil and gas, to intensive-resource industries. Furthermore, it is not clear how the government pretends to address the acute demographic situation, particularly in the north and the east, or what role the state should play.

Russia's strategies in Northeast Asia are aimed to gain great power recognition. As Anne Clunan notes. "The national interests were defined as maintaining Russia's status as a great power by repeatedly pointing out Russia's Eurasian geography and historical role both in Europe in Asia." (Clunan, 2014) Despite the ongoing confrontation over the Ukraine, the West continues to be Russia's main 'Other'. The Russian political elites seek entry into the Western political order rather than replacing it. (Clunan, 2014) Sergunin argues that Russia is a "reformist" nation: wants to change the rules but not replacing it by their own. (Sergunin, 2016) Russia does not reject being part of Western civilization and emphasises that its 'pivot' to Asia is "strategic and economic, but will not have significance for its identity." (Laruelle, 2014). This thesis argues that Russia's long-term project to develop and improve living conditions in Asiatic Russia, and advance its integration into Northeast Asia constitutes not only a development project but a meta-project intended to reassert Russia's greatpowerness. This meta-project is not only an integration or a developmental one; it is an identity project, as well as it is destined to reinforce Russia's great power identity. The double-task project to develop and integrate Asiatic Russia into NEA and into Russia is a central element defining and promoting Russia as an Asian power, and the idea of Russia as a great power straddling the West and Asia. This thesis argues that this project is still to be substantiated in term of policies. In this sense, Russia's identity as Asian power has yet to be substantiated. South Korea's specialist Rimma Tangalicheva argues that "Russia's so called 'pivot' to Asia is still in the level of intentions." (Interview 18) For the time being, Russia's identity meta-project destined to reinforce Russia's great power identity in Asia appears to be no more than ambitions: a strong desire to achieve something that is strongly desired and difficult to achieve, in this case to be recognised as an Asian power. Arguably, the feasibility of the project depends to a large extent on the ability of the Russian state and particularly the Russian economy to adapt to the changing circumstances in world affairs.

Dostoyevsky's words may help to better understand Russia's current position straddling the West and the East. In 1881, Dostoyevsky asked: "Forever turn away from Europe?" He replied, "Not forever, only for the time being and not altogether". He called on Russia not to be servants of Europe but to gain independence in Asia, as it could refresh and transform Russia. It seems that in 2016, Dostoyevsky's call to go east lives on, albeit in a different form.

> Meanwhile Asia may be, in truth, our future outlet! I reiterate this exclamation. And if we could only take cognizance of this idea, even partially, what a root would be rendered whole! Asia, our Asiatic Russia, — why, this is also our sick root, which has to be not only refreshed but resurrected and transformed! A principle, a new principle, a new vision of the matter — this is what we need. (Dostoyevsky, 1949:1047)

Russia perceives itself as a great power straddling the Atlantic and the Asian states, and Siberia is a prime component of this self-conceptualisation. The European vector of Russia's foreign policy continues to be the strongest; the Asian vector, however, has gained more relevance. New external conditions in Northeast Asia forces Russia to adapt and evolve its foreign and security policies to reflect its position between Asia and the West. The rise of Asia brings both opportunities and challenges for Russia.

This thesis has been titled: *Russia's Great Power Ambitions: The Place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's Contemporary Relations with Northeast Asia.* This thesis attempted to examine the link between the internal and external geopolitics of Asiatic Russia and their connection to Russia's great power dilemmas in Northeast Asia: the way in which Russia's geopolitics and internal ideas – on the one hand, and international political processes, on the other hand – determine the place of Siberia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic in Russia's contemporary relations with Northeast Asian countries.

APPENDIX I

Transliteration Table

This thesis followed a simplified form of the BGN/PCGN 1947 system for the romanization of Russian, omitting hard and soft signs, ligatures and diacritics, and using *yo* to denote *ë*. Exceptions were made in the case of Russian words conventionally transliterated in English under a different system.

Russian letter	English transliteration
А (а)	A (a)
Б (б)	B (b)
В (в)	V (v)
Г (г)	G (g)
Д (д)	D (d)
Е (е)	Ye (ye) (e)
Ё (ё)	Yo (yo)
Ж (ж)	Zh (zh)
З (з)	Z (z)
И (и)	I (i)
Й (й)	Y (y)
К (к)	K (k)
Л (л)	L (l)
М (м)	M (m)
Н (н)	N (n)
О (о)	O (o)
П (п)	P (p)
Р (р)	R (r)
С (с)	S (s)
Т (т)	T (t)
У (у)	U (u)
Ф (ф)	F (f)
Х (х)	Kh (kh)
Ц (ц)	Ts (ts)
Ч (ч)	Ch (ch)
Ш (ш)	Sh (sh)
Щ (щ)	Shch (shch)
ъ (твёрдый знак)	-
Ы (ы)	Y (y)
ь (мягкий знак)	-
Э (э)	E (e)
Ю (ю)	Yu (yu)
Я (я)	Ya (ya)

APPENDIX II

Acronyms

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BAM	Baikal-Amur Mainline
CER	Chinese Eastern Railway
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific
CSTC	Russian-Japanese Commission on Scientific and Technological Cooperation
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EEZ	Economic Especial Zone
EEZo	Economic Exclusive Zone
EIA	Energy Information Administration
ESPO	Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline
EU	European Union
FEFU	Far Eastern Federal University
FSU	Former Soviet Union
HCIS	Heavy and Chemical Industrialization Strategy
IFES	Institute of Far Eastern Studies (Russia)
IREECAS	Institute of Russian, Eastern European & Central Asian Studies
ISS	International Space Station
KOGAS	Korea Gas Corporation
KOPRI	Korean Polar Research Institute
LNG	Liquid Natural Gas
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations
MID	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Russia)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPCI	Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEA	Northeast Asia
NEP	New Economic Policy
NIPR	Japanese National Institute of Polar Research
NSR	Northern Sea Route
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAS	Russian Academy of Science
RDIF	Russian Direct Investment Fund
RFE	Russian Far East
RIAC	Russian International Affairs Council
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
ROSSTAT	Russian Federal State Statistics Service
RUSNANO	Russian Corporation on Nanotechnologies

SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SPbGU	Saint Petersburg State University
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TRD	Territories for Rapid Development
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

APPENDIX III

Population in Siberia's Administrative Entities

Data from the Russian Federal Service of State Statistics (Rosstat). Population in thousands.

Federal Entity/City	**1989 Census**	**2002 Census**	**2010 Census**
Altai Krai	**2,822**	**2,607**	**2,419**
Barnaul	601	600	612
Rubtsovsk	171	163	147
Biysk	233	218	210
Altai Republic	**191**	**202**	**206**
Gorno-Altaysk	46	53	56
Amur Oblast	**1,057**	**902**	**830**
Blagovechensk	205	219	214
Belgorosk	73	67	68
Svobodny	80	63	58
Tynda	61	40	36
Skovorodino	13	10	9
Buryatia Republic	**1,041**	**981**	**972**
Ulan-Ude	352	359	404
Severobaykalsk	28	25	24
Chukotka Autonomous Okrug	**157**	**53**	**50**
Anadyr	17	11	13
Providenya	5	2	1
Bilbino	15	6	5
Pevek	12	5	4
Mys Schmidta	4	0.7	0.4
Irkutsk Oblast	**2,830**	**2,581**	**2,428**
Irkutsk	622	593	587
Angarsk	265	247	233
Bratsk	255	259	246
Usolye-Sibirskoe	106	90	83
Ust-Ilimsk	109	100	86
Ust-Kut	61	49	45
Jewish Autonomous Oblast	**215**	**190**	**176**
Birobidzhan	83	77	75
Obluchye	12	11	9
Kamchatka Krai	**466**	**358**	**322**
Petropavlosk-Kamchatsky	268	198	179
Yelizovo	46	41	39
Ust-Kamchatsky	28	15	11
Kemerovo Oblast	**520**	**484**	**532**
Novokuznetsk	599	549	547

Prokopyevsk	273	224	210
Leninsk-Kuznetsky	165	112	101
Khabarovsk Krai	**1,824**	**1,436**	**1,343**
Khabarovsk	600	583	577
Komsomolsk-on-Amur	315	281	263
Nikolayevsk-on-Amur	36	28	22
Amursk	58	47	42
Sovetskaya Gavan	34	30	27
Okhotsk	9	5	4
Vanino	21	19	17
Khakassia Republic	**568**	**546**	**532**
Abakan	154	165	165
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	**1,268**	**1,432**	**1,532**
Nizhnevartovsk	211	239	251
Surgut	247	285	306
Khanty-Mansiysk	34	53	80
Krasnoyarsk Krai	**3,596**	**3,023**	**2,828**
Krasnoyarsk	912	875	973
Norilsk	174	134	175
Yeniseysk	22	20	18
Dudinka	32	25	22
Igarka	18	8	6
Turukhansk	8	4	4
Dikson	4	1.1	0.6
Kurgan Oblast	**1,104**	**1,019**	**910**
Kurgan	333	345	355
Shadrinsk	77	80	86
Magadan Oblast	**542**	**182**	**156**
Magadan	151	99	95
Susuman	16	7	5
Palatka	10	4	4
Seymchan	9	3	2
Novosibirsk Oblast	**2,782**	**2,692**	**2,665**
Novosibirsk	1,437	1,426	1,474
Berdsk	79	88	97
Iskitim	67	62	60
Omsk Oblast	**2,782**	**2,692**	**1,977**
Omsk	1,148	1,134	1,154
Sakha Republic	**1,081**	**949**	**972**
Yakutsk	186	210	269
Mirny	38	39	37
Neryungri	72	66	61
Lensk	30	24	24
Aldan	27	24	21
Udachny	19	15	12
Tiksi	11	5	5
Sakhalin Oblast	**709**	**546**	**497**
Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk	159	175	181

Okha	36	27	23
Korsakov	45	36	33
Kholmsk	51	35	30
Sverdlovsk Oblast	**4,716**	**4,486**	**4,297**
Yekaterinburg	1,364	1,293	1,344
Nizhny Tagil	439	390	361
Kamensk-Uralsky	207	186	174
Tomsk Oblast	**1,001**	**1,046**	**1,047**
Tomsk	501	487	524
Seversk		108	109
Tuva Republic	**309**	**305**	**307**
Kyzyl	84	104	109
Tyumen Oblast	**3,080**	**3,264**	**3,395**
Tyumen	476	510	581
Tobolsk	94	92	99
Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug	**486**	**507**	**522**
Novy Urengoy	93	94	104
Salekhard	32	36	42
Noyabrsk	85	96	110
Nefteyugansk	93	107	122
Zabaykalsky Krai	**1,377**	**1,155**	**1,107**
Chita	365	316	324
Zabaykalsk	8	10	11
Nerchinsk	16	15	15

APPENDIX IV

Interviews

No.	Name/Institution	Date and Place of Interview
1	Andrey Ostrovskiy, RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies.	Moscow, November 2012
2	Vladimir Portyakov, RAS Institute of Far Easttern Studies.	Moscow, April 2015
3	Valeriy Kistanov, RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies.	Moscow, April 2015
4	Alexander Zhebin, RAS Institute of Far Eastern Studies.	Moscow, April 2015
5	Igor Makarov, Higher School of Economics, Moscow.	Moscow, April 2015
6	Nikolay Samoylov, Saint Petersburg State University	St Petersburg, November 2012
7	Norio Horie, University of Toyama	St Petersburg, November 2012
8	Ichiro Iwasaki, Hitotsubashi University	Tokyo, October, 2013
9	Zhao Huasheng, Fudan University	Shanghai, October, 2013
10	Xin Zhang, East China Normal University	Shanghai, October, 2013
11	Yi Jiang, Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies	Beijing, October, 2013
12	Liu Fenghua, Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies	Beijing, October, 2013
13	Ding Xiaoxing, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations	Beijing, October, 2013
14	Sergei Sevastyanov, Far Eastern Federal University.	Vladivostok, October, 2013
15	Artyom Lukin, Far Eastern Federal University	Vladivostok, October, 2013
16	Semyon Korotchik, Far Eastern Federal University	Vladivostok, October, 2013
17	Alexander Sergunin, Saint Petersburg State University	Saint Petersburg, September, 2016
18	Rimma Tangalicheva, Saint Petersburg State University	Saint Petersburg, October, 2016

The Ethics Committee of the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, granted approval on July 6, 2012, to conduct the following research:

Fieldwork 2012

Research and objectives

The fieldwork I am planning to undertake this year in Saint Petersburg, the Russian Federation, will last approximately three months and consists of two parts: interviews at Academic Institutions and secondary analysis of data at different libraries. It is worth mentioning that I studied my master degree at Saint Petersburg State University from 2007 to 2009, at the department of Global Studies in the Faculty of Sociology, therefore I speak Russian and have acquaintances at the University. Thus, with the support of the department of Global Studies, I will be able to get access in Saint Petersburg to the National Library of Russia and the Library Maksim Gorky, the State University's Library. Furthermore, I will have the possibility to interview academics with huge knowledge on my field at the Faculty of Sociology, the School of International Relations and the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science of the Saint Petersburg State University.

The scarce information outside Russia on specific issues of my research topic makes a fieldwork in that country indispensable. Ergo, the main objective of my fieldwork is to obtain information and to have access to documents on my subject of study either in English or in Russian language; the aim is to get material that I could not otherwise obtain in the UK. Thus, the proposed fieldwork will undoubtedly provide me with the elements to deepen on my topic and to elucidate certain aspects of the current situation in Northeast Asia.

Possible questions to ask:

A: Russia and Siberia

1.Is Russia a European or a Eurasian country? Why?

2.Do you agree with the statement "Russia is culturally European but given its peculiarities in geography and history has different interests"?

3.Do you agree with the idea that Russia can only survive and develop within the existing borders if it stays as a great power?

4.Should depopulation in Siberia continue or should it be massively repopulated? What should be the measures to undertake?

5. Will the increasing accessibility of the Arctic enable and propel Russia to become a major maritime state?

6.What do you think about the handover of a sizable portion of Moscow's functions to the cities and provinces of the Far East? Will development succeed without regional autonomy?

B: Siberia and Asia

7. Is the Russian government translating its recent pronouncements of developing and modernizing Asiatic Russia into a sustained development program?

8. How should Russia manage its problems of economic geography? Do you think that Siberia is an asset or a liability for Russia?

9. What is an acceptable role for the rising Asian countries - especially China, Korea, and Japan - in Siberian/ Far East development?

10.How Russia can avoid its Far East being transformed into a raw material appendage of rising Asia, particularly China?

11. What is the impact of Asiatic orientation of Siberia on national identity issues, and how will this shape Russian Foreign Policy in future?

Dates to be on fieldwork: 08/09/2012 to 06/12/2012

Institutions to visit:

National Library of Russia (Saint Petersburg).
Library Maksim Gorky, Saint Petersburg State University.
School of International Relations, Saint Petersburg State University.
Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University.
Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science, Saint Petersburg State University.

The Ethics Committee of the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University, granted approval on September 9, 2013, to conduct the following research:

Fieldwork 2013

Research and objectives

I am planning to undertake fieldwork this year at academic institutions in Vladivostok, the Russian Federation; and Beijing and Shanghai, in the People's Republic of China, and Tokyo, Japan. It will last approximately four weeks and consists of two parts: academic interviews and secondary analysis of data. It is worth mentioning that I am fluent in Russian and we have acquaintances at the Universities in Russia and China.

The scarce information outside the region on the issues of my research topic makes a fieldwork in these countries indispensable. Ergo, the main objective is to obtain information that I could not otherwise get in the UK. Thus, the proposed fieldwork will undoubtedly provide me with elements to deepen on my topic and to elucidate certain aspects of the current situation in Northeast Asia.

Possible questions to ask:

A: Russia and Siberia

12. Is the Russian government translating its recent pronouncements of developing and modernizing Asiatic Russia into a sustained development program? Are there disparate center-region priorities? Is that a key problem?
13. What are the special measures that should be taken to improve rapidly and constantly the living standards of the region?
14. How the revenues from the sale of raw materials should be redistributed?
15. What is the rationale for developing Siberia? Are geostrategic principles still above the commercial principles? What should be the role of the state?
16. Do market transformations and the market economy itself rejects the key principles that catalyzed the development of Siberia in Imperial and Soviet times? Under which principles the measures to reverse the current negative trends in the region are to be taken?
17. What do you think about the handover of a sizable portion of Moscow's functions to the cities and provinces of the Far East? Will development succeed without regional autonomy?

B: Siberia and Asia

18. What are the perspectives of Russia and Northeast Asian countries on the future of Asiatic Russia and the vicinity; and to what extent are their views compatible and to what extent they differ? Can they commit their funds to infrastructure development? What would they want from it?
19. After the APEC summit in 2012, is the Russian government translating its pronouncements of developing and modernizing Asiatic Russia into a sustained development program? Does the semi-colonial legacy persist? Is it necessary to transfer to Vladivostok or to any other Siberian city, part of the government institutions?
20. Are there sufficient grounds for stating that during the post-Soviet era the center's attitude toward the eastern territories has radically changed?
21. What is an acceptable role for the rising Asian countries - especially China, Korea, and Japan - in Siberian/ Far East development?
22. How Russia can avoid its Far East being transformed into a raw material appendage of rising Asia, particularly China?
23. Can more integration with Northeast Asia and more independence and autonomy of the regions threaten and undermine Russia's sovereignty over the region? Could this be the first step toward separatism and disintegration?
24. Can China be the main partner in developing and modernizing Siberia? What might be Japan's role in this endeavor? And South Korea's?

Dates to be on fieldwork: 04/10/2013 to 03/11/2013

Institutions to visit:

- Centre for Russian Studies, East China Normal University, Shanghai

Primary contact: Prof. FENG Shaolei, Dean, School of Advanced International and Area Studies.

- School of International Studies, Peking University, Beijing

Primary contact: Prof. ZHANG Xiaoming, Professor of International Relations.

- School of Regional and International Studies, Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok.

Primary contact: Prof. Sergey SEVASTIANOV, Director, Asia Pacific International Institutions & Multilateral Cooperation Studies Centre.

- Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

APPENDIX V

Maps

***Map 1*. Russia's expansion phases in Europe, 1460-1796.**

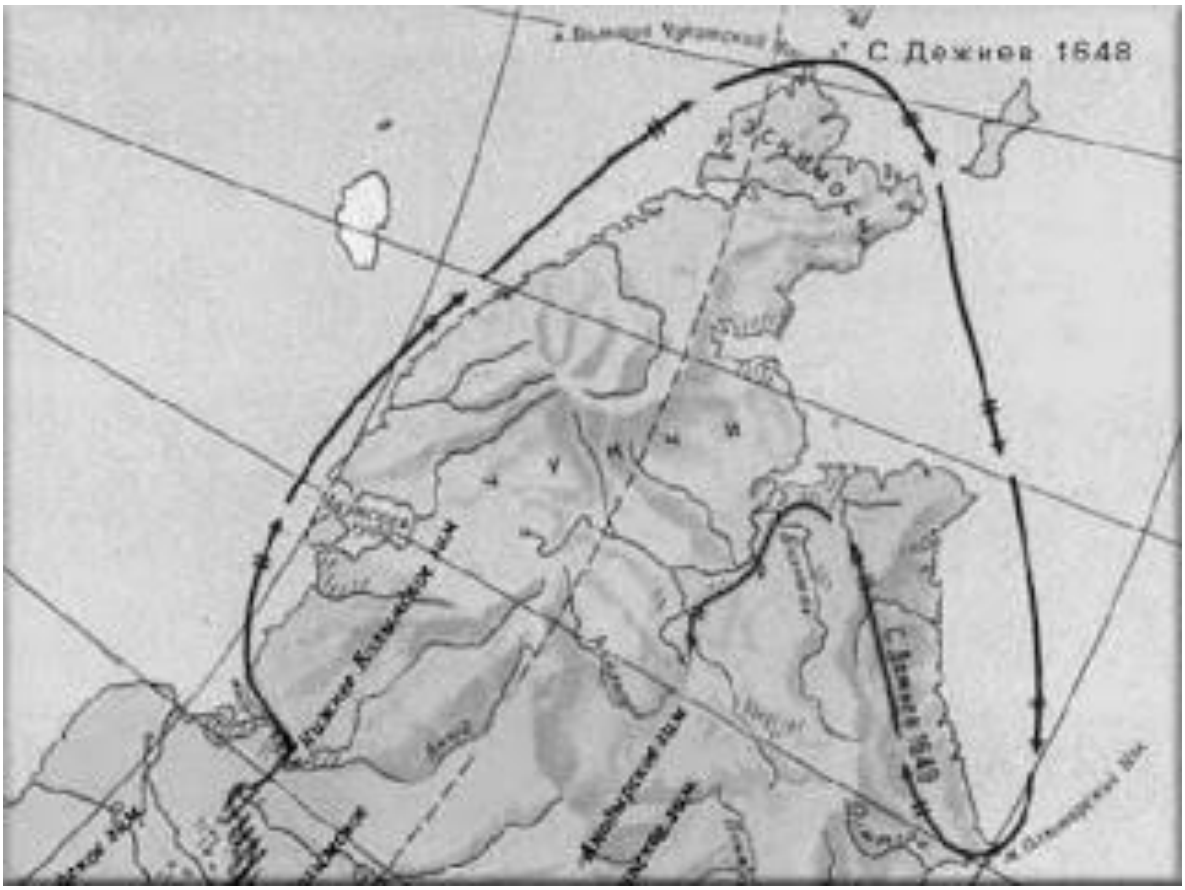
Source: Stratfor.

***Map 2*. Russia's expansion river routes.**

Source: Wikipedia.

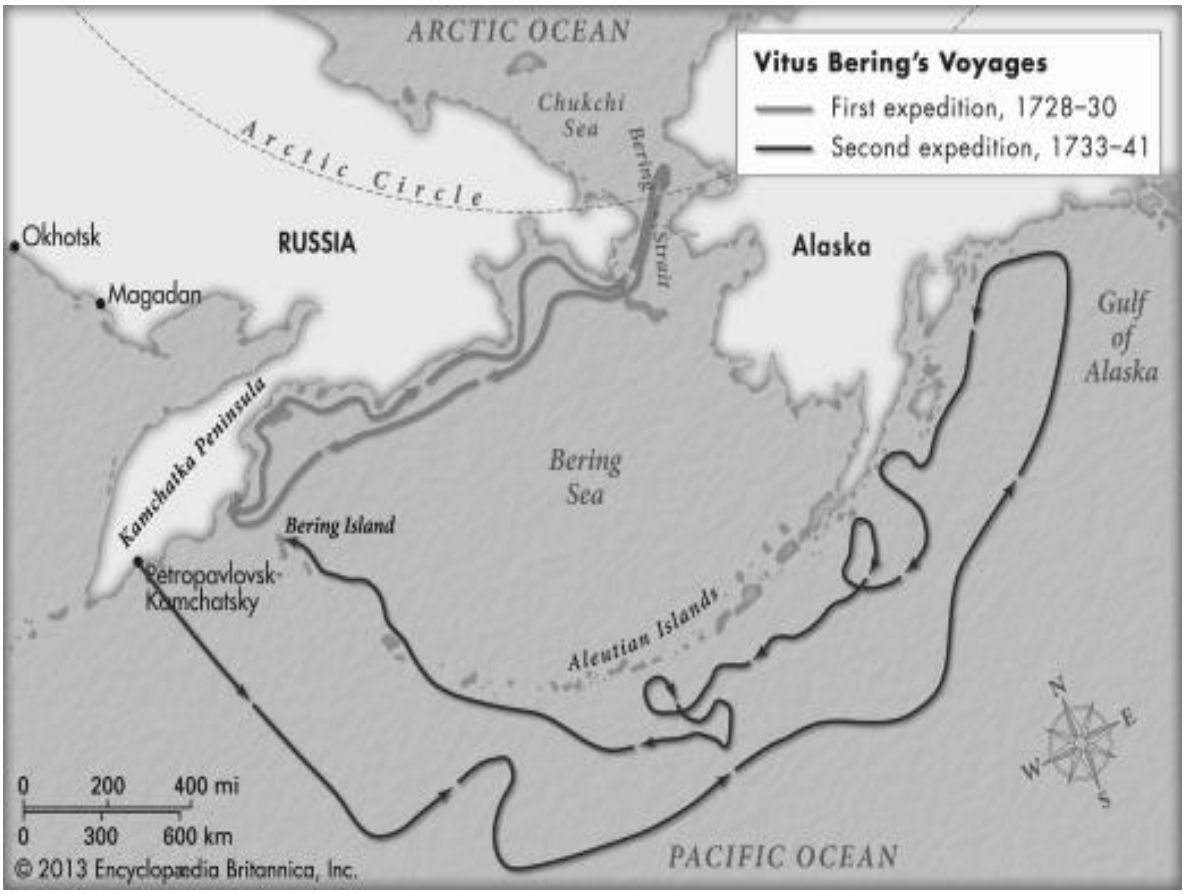
***Map 3*. Russia's Eastward Expansion, 1581-1800.**

Source: Stratfor.



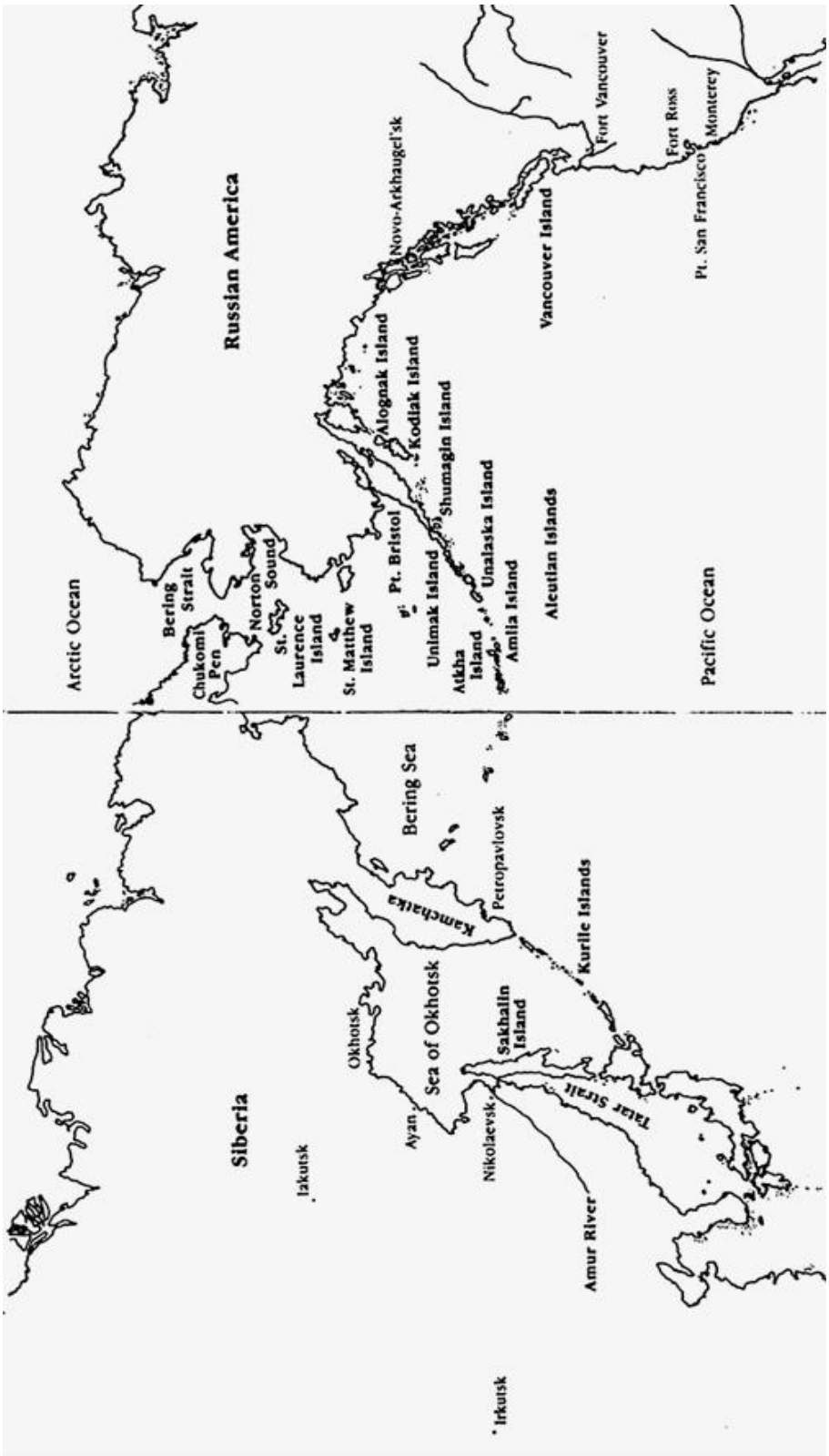
***Map 4*. Dezhnev's expedition, 1646.**

Source: Russiapedia.



***Map 5*. Vitus Bering's expeditions, 1728-1741.**

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica.



***Map 6*. Russian America.**

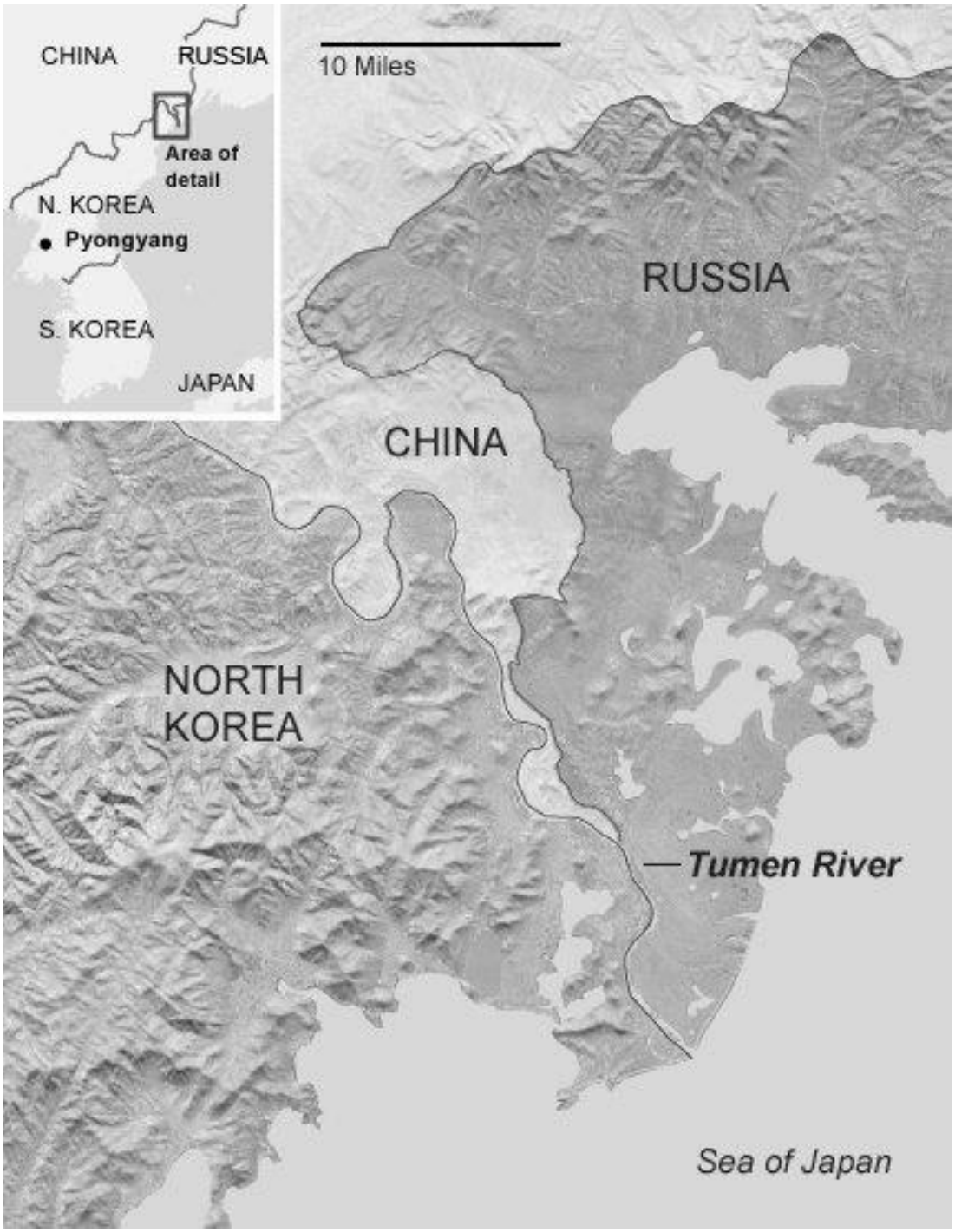
Source: Byzantine Catholic Church.

***Map 7*. Qing Empire 1820.**

Source: Zonu.com.

***Map 8*. Amur River.**

Source: American.edu.

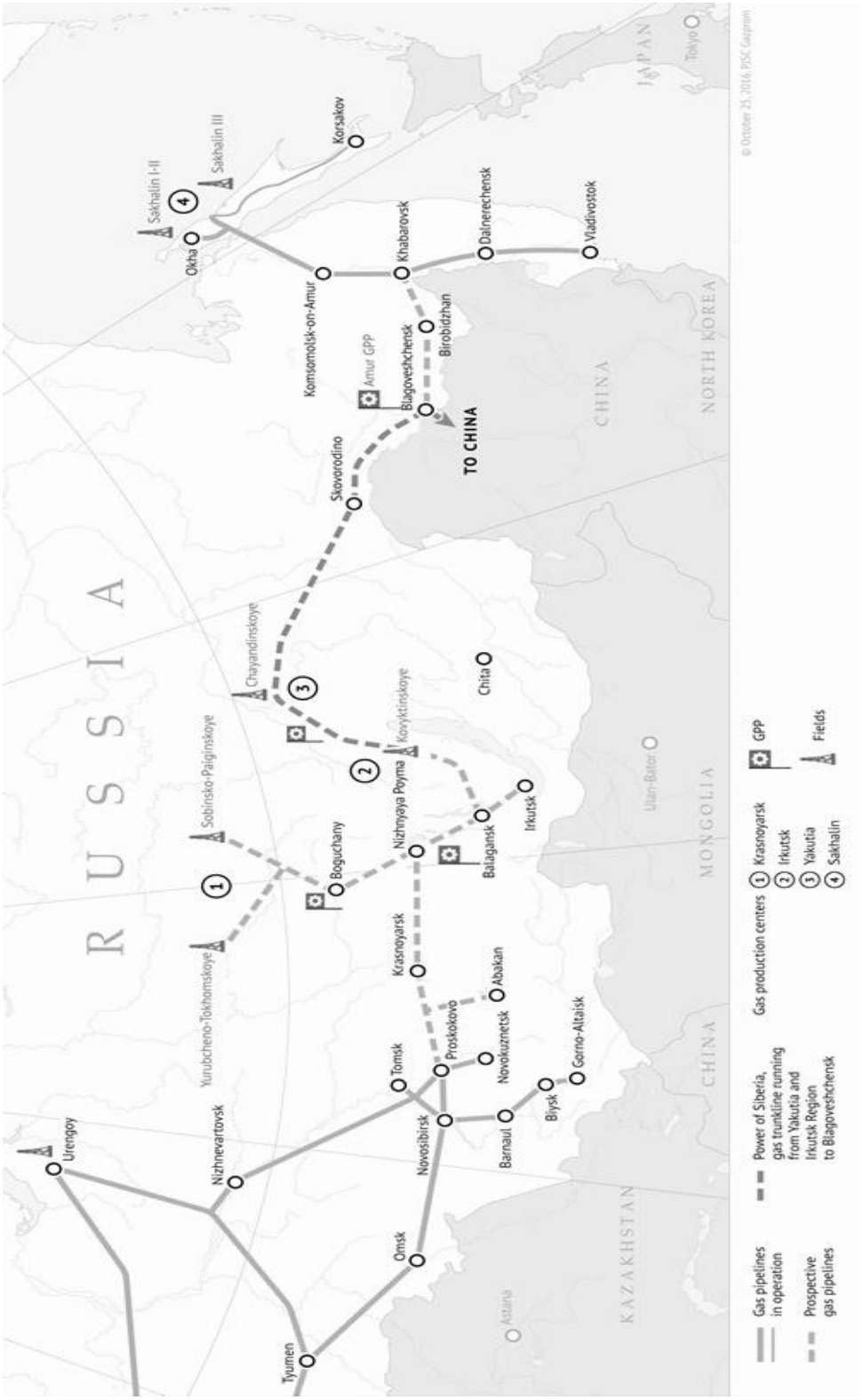


***Map 9*. Russia-China-North Korea Border.**

Source: The New York Times.

***Map 10*. Nomonham (Khalkin-gol)**

Source: The Military History Society of New South Wales.

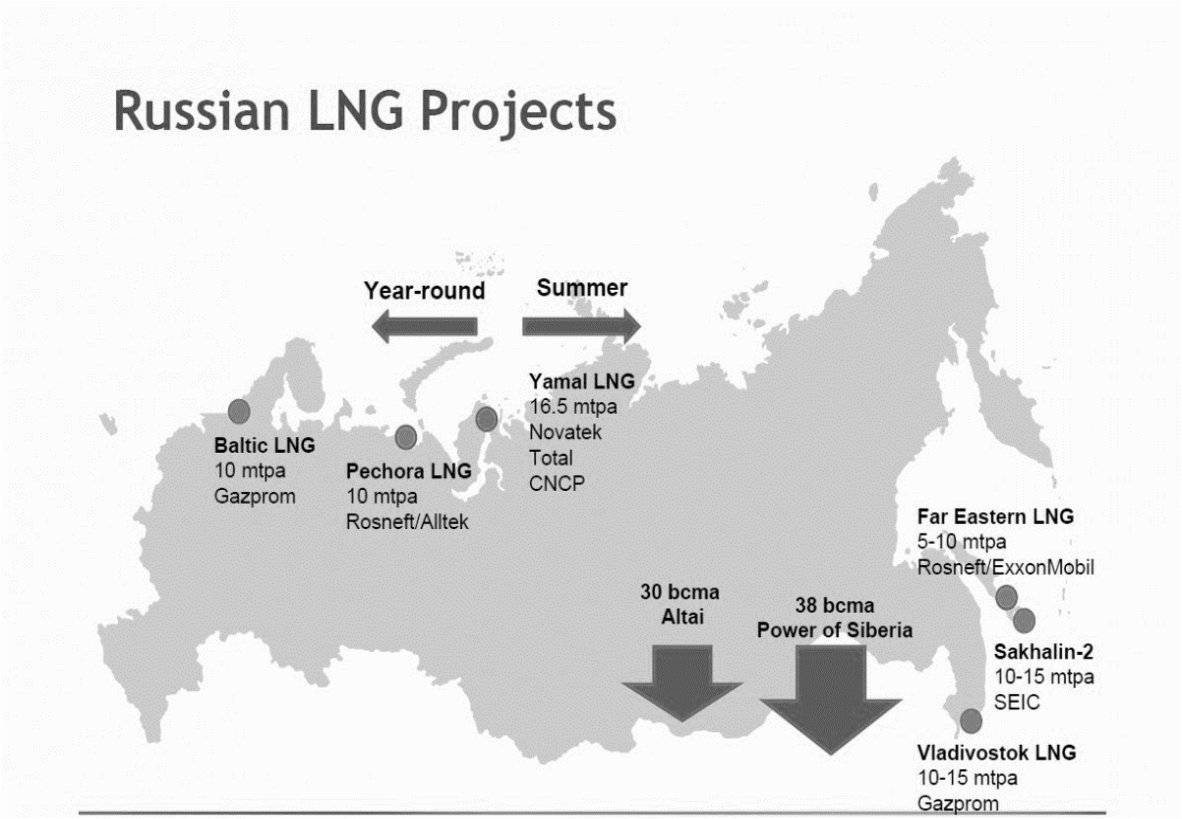


***Map 11*. The Power of Siberia**

Source: Gazprom.

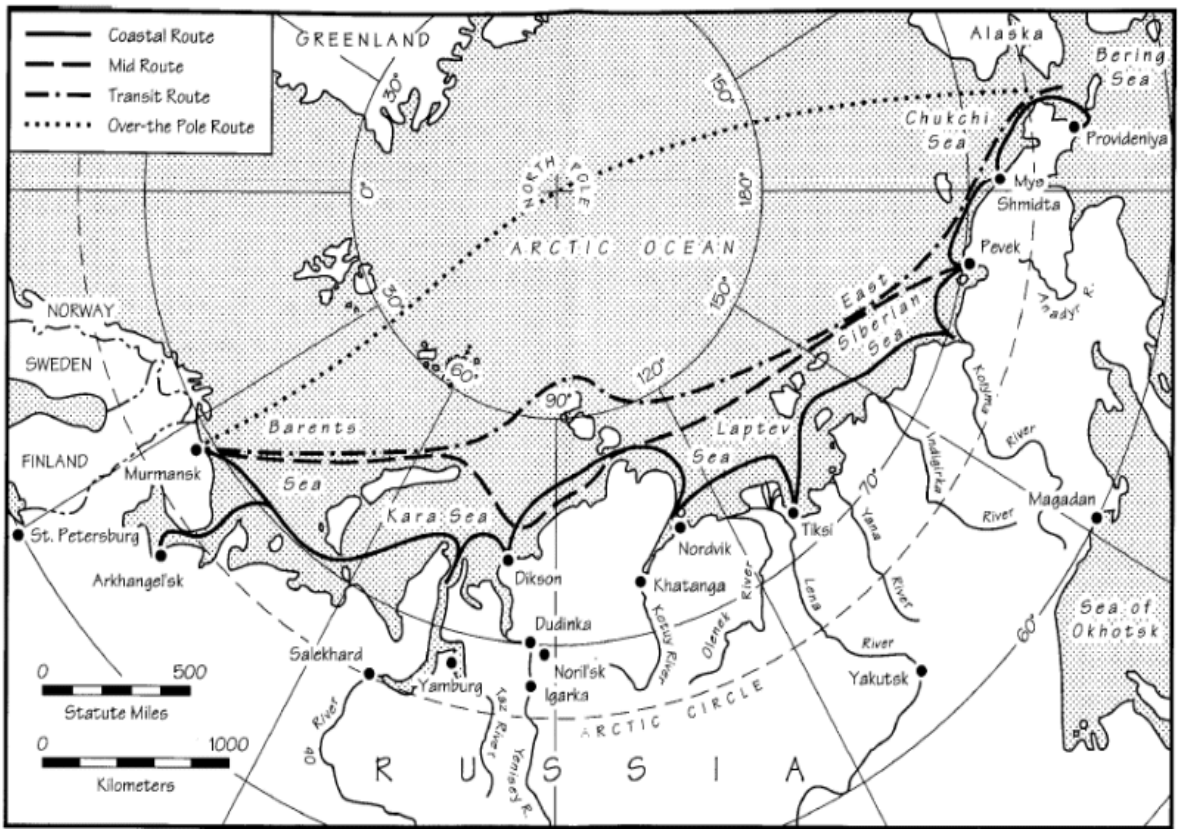
***Map 12*. ESPO.**

Source: Warwick Business School.



***Map 13*. Russia's LNG projects.**

Source: Warwick Business School.

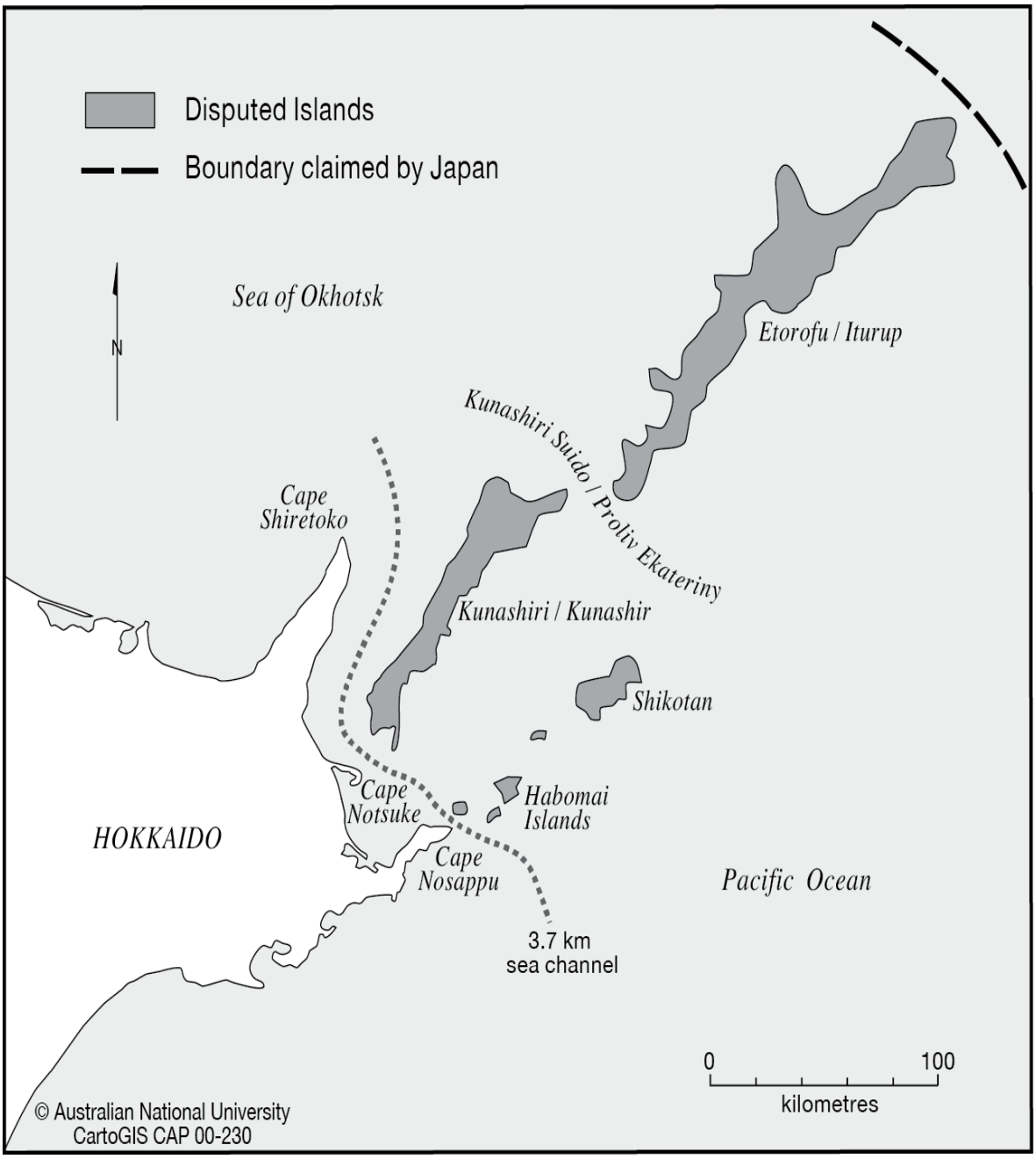


***Map 14*. The Northern Sea Route**

Source: Global Security

***Map 15*. The High North**

Source: Nordregio.



***Map 16*. The Russia-Japan territorial dispute**

Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University

***Map 17*. The Korean Peninsula**

Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University

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